

The Beat Within



THE BEAT WITHIN • A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE • VOLUME 13.01



Happy New Year Beat editorial note readers!

It blows our minds that we are now beginning our 13th year of publishing this unique powerhouse of a magazine, filled with the prose, poetry and art of young people whose voices are routinely discredited and discounted by a larger society too willing to treat our writers — and the world they inhabit — as disposable.

We hope you will see this new year as a new opportunity to make changes, big changes, in how you live your lives. And if anyone doubts that dramatic change is possible, all you have to do is look at the race for President of the United States. The first surprise is that a woman has been the leading candidate to become the next President. That would be a major "first". But that surprise has already been overtaken by an even bigger surprise... an African-American has moved to the head of the pack, and could become the first Black President of the United States! Another leading candidate is a Latino! Just a few short years ago, no woman, no Black, and no Latino could have mounted a serious challenge for the White House, but this year may be the year that one of them succeeds! The point is this: what was impossible yesterday can become possible today if you make it so.

California has finally begun to abandon its huge juvenile prisons across the state (two have been ordered closed this year). The State is moving to close CYA warehouses, in favor of keeping more and more young people close to home in the counties where their crimes occurred so that they can benefit from the support of family and local programs that know their needs. It has taken this state a very long time to acknowledge the failure of the CYA, but it has come. Change is possible.

Now it's your turn. You, too, must now make some fundamental changes, just as the State has done. In a big way, California has said, "In the matter of juvenile justice, our thinking has been wrong." And that's where the basic change must start in you, in how you think about things. We know life can be very hard and that you can be forced into situations that require desperate acts. We know that you (like us) will continue to make mistakes. We know that nothing works exactly as planned, and that "shhh happens" sometimes. But we also know that without changing your thinking, the hardships you have in your lives will also not change, that doing the same as you've done in the past will only bring the same consequences in the future.

So, like the possibility that America will be redefined by electing its first Black President ever, we'd like you to consider redefining yourselves. The future does not have to look like the past. What was not possible yesterday can be possible tomorrow. As the greatest of our Presidents, Abraham Lincoln, said nearly 150 years ago, "The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew."

Think anew and act anew! Your future depends on it!

Yes, we are proud of ourselves for having provided you this vehicle for self-expression these past twelve years. But our self-pride pales in comparison to the pride we feel for you who have the courage, week after week, to open your hearts and your minds on these pages, you who have to face realities of life that few Americans even believe exist. Yet, as disappointed as we can be in some of your choices, and as sad as it makes us to see decisions made by children that have life-long adult consequences, we are still bursting with pride for you.

We know that most of you had to spend your holidays behind these walls, thinking about what you could be doing or used to do or will be doing again. So, we want to lift our New Year's champagne glasses up to drink a toast to you, our writers, and to the possibility for change. May 2008 be the year that marks your departure from a life that alternatives between freedom and slavery into one that moves you forward, step by step, into a brighter future.

We wish you all a Happy New Year!

The topics addressed in this first issue of the new year are, "When Someone Close To You Passes..." - Most of us have experienced someone close to us passing, but we all have different ways of making sure that person's legacy lives on. When someone close to you passes, what do you do to help the person's legacy live on? Do you get a RIP t-shirt made? Do you get the person's name tattooed on you? Do you share the memories you have with the person with someone else? Do you continue to live the lifestyle the person who passed lived or do you wake up and change your own life? When someone close to you passes, explain in The Beat how you are making sure they live on through you, for better or for worse...

Our second topic, "How Do You Overcome Your Fears?" - We all face fears in life, some fears we talk about and some fears we hide from the world. What are your fears? Do you think fear makes you a weak person? Does fear stop you from doing things in your life negative or positive? Tell The Beat Within about your outlook on your fears and how you've been able to overcome them or how you plan to overcome them...

The third topic, "What Is ONE Thing You Want To Accomplish In Your Life?" - If you could pick one thing (and one thing only) that you could definitely accomplish during your lifetime, what would it be? Think about this a bit before you write. It may be things like getting a house, a good job, making lots of money, getting a college degree or having a family; Or it could be something less material like finding inner peace, making amends to people you've hurt, making a lifestyle/mentality shift, or re-establishing a broken relationship. Remember it can only be one thing, so choose wisely and be descriptive about what you want to accomplish.

Last but not least. "Describe Your Favorite Holiday Memory..."

We must say, many of you truly stepped up with the topics this week, and once again we thank you serious writers for giving us a glimpse of you. It is you writers that make this publication what it is, a very special important tool. Thanks.

OK, it's time to run, enjoy issue 13.01. We look forward to seeing you in the workshops or in the mail. Speaking of mail, if you do write us, we'll do our best at the very least to send you a Beat out of respect for taking the time to write us. As for request, we'll do our best, but the demand is high, so don't expect much other than a big thank you for thinking of us, and hopefully your piece in print!

This issue goes out to you, our friends, without good friends, where would we be? Thanks for believing in this special vehicle -The Beat Within. We are honored to have your voices in "our" pages. We are honored that you even want to have this paper. We at this publication/program are enjoying the ride of our lives, and we can only hope this ride you are on, is taking you to a place of comfort and support and not into further danger and heartache. See you all soon.

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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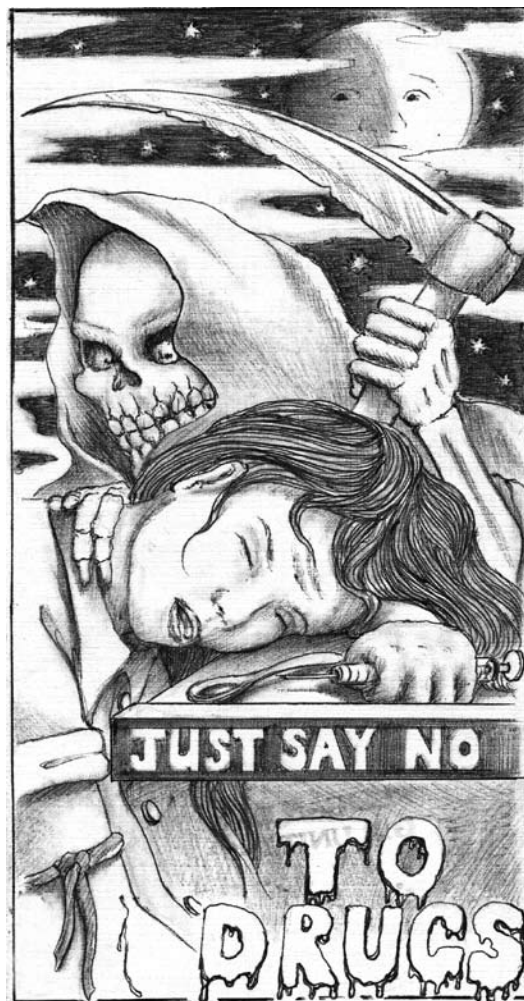
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The Beat Without 50



Wake Up to A Gunshot

Well this is Steven. I had a lot of people pass away in my life, but there is this one person that changed my whole life and his name was Dopey. Well the reason why I say that he changed my life is 'cause if you ever said that there's no real homeboys in this world he was.

He was the type that would do anything for me, even though I was locked up and he will always show a savage some love. He even took in my mom when she had nowhere to go. But now that he's dead he still lives on. That's why I got my hood on my back and it's not just that. It's 'cause he's never gonna fade in my life no matter where he's at.

But the thing I'm mad at myself for is that he always told me to never go to CYA and now I'm looking at that. I think of him every day when I go to sleep. I just see him every time I close my eyes it gets me mad that I'm locked up now and not out there to go to his funeral. For some reason I been mad at the world just 'cause his life got token by someone he didn't even know.

And if anyone ever seen their homeboy get shot in front of you, then homeboy or home girl I know how you feel waking up everyday to a gun shot. Because that's what I wake up to everyday.

RIP Dopey you never gonna fade in my eyes homeboy and to all that been through it stay up and to those who wanted to know what that tattoo means on my face, there it goes.

-Steven, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thank you for writing this wonderful piece. We wish we could have known Dopey and we really feel the love he must have had for you - to take in your mom, to stand up for you, to give you advice this way. And of course as you say, it's not just the loss, it's the violence of that loss that can really mess with your mind. We hope you keep writing about him, and about how you feel when you miss him, because maybe that will help take some of the pain away and also see that there are better ways to live life?

The Plane Flew On Sheer Dumb Luck

On Christmas Eve, 2006, I was on a flight to go to see my grandparents and aunts and uncles and cousins. I was about, like, 25 minutes late to the airport. I find that by my luck, the plane was delayed about an hour. I checked in and went to the gate. About thirty minutes later, the plane was supposed to be boarding and I found that the plane still was not there. About three hours later, the plane starts boarding, so I get on the plane and find it with chips and food all over the floor. We pushed back after a thirty-minute de-icing, then taxied to the runway to find about another two-hour delay. By then we needed to re de-ice, but the pilot did not, so we were underway and we reached about 10,000 feet. The plane started to shake violently and I had noticed during takeoff it took about fifteen seconds longer to reach take-off speed. After the plane shook violently, the plane started a die, which we dropped at 1,000 feet per minute and dropped for about five minutes. It felt like hours.

I later found out we dropped 700 feet over five minutes. The pilot decided not to turn back, so we continued to climb after he regained (the right latitude,) and the whole rest of the flight everyone just sat there and did not speak. I later did research and found between the ice on the wing slowed the airflow and the drop was caused by the stabilizer freezing, so the pilot over-reacted and it stuck, and he regained control by sheer dumb luck.

-Chris, Marin

From The Beat: Amazing story, and you tell it so well. How did you learn all these details? You're a beautiful storyteller. It sounds like you could have done a better job maneuvering this plane back to the hanger than the pilot did flying it. Maybe you should become a pilot some day, or, better yet, a writer. You're all lucky you're alive.

One Thing I Want to Accomplish

Many people look at me and make many assumptions about who I am, what makes me, and what could break me. As of now, there is a specific situation I'm dealing with.

Since I've been locked-up, I have been asked a few questions from a few people and evaluated at YDDC (Youth Diagnostic and Development Center).

Through this very brief period of time in my life, I have experienced and gained a strong understanding of the process of which I have been through. I have learned that even though the evaluations, questions, and interviews have taken place, these specialists still don't have an understanding of me as an individual of what can help me, and what I need to work on. As I do a self-inventory, I can recognize what it is I need for myself. But what do I know? I'm just a teenager that can't be trusted, doesn't know what is good for me, and can't make decisions that can benefit me in a positive way. That's what they think but I see myself as a different person, I know myself as a different person.

To get to the point, the one thing I want to accomplish in life is to find a way I can get people to know, understand, and help me for who I am, and not what I'm not, but what they think I am.

- Jeffrey, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: While you worry about what other people think, you easily dismiss that specialists are trying to help you. You said that "many people make many assumptions" about you. Keep in mind, if you act like a thug - you'll be treated like a thug. The important thing to remember is that these people are simply trying to help to the best of their ability, and not everyone has the opportunity to be placed in better environments through special programs.

This Time

I was with some friends.

It was winter, icy, windy.

We were hanging out

in a car in a dark alley.

We were full of doubt but

we didn't want to show it.

And then, red and blue lights

in the mirrors of the Cadillac.

We took deep breaths, wondered

what we were guilty of,

this time.

-Michael, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Fabulous poem Michael. It speaks for itself. All we can say is we'd love to see more.

Last Night Someone Close To Me Passed

Somebody that passes away just last night and it was my grandpa, and he was a good man. I wish I could have seen him before he passed away. I wish I could've told him that I loved him, and that I should have visited him more. I know he is in a better place now, so I got to be happy for him.

I hope your listening to me grandpa, I love you and miss you. I miss being with him, watching TV with him, talking to him even though I didn't understand him very much, but we did have a good relationship. 11/27 RIP Grandpa Jose.

- Delinquent, Land Of Enchantment

From the Beat: Landing yourself in jail prevented you from spending quality time with your grandfather. If you would've stayed off the streets and out of trouble, you would've had the chance to tell him you loved him. We hope that you think twice about going back to what got you in here, you might miss-out on other important things.

Where I From

I from where the hammers drum, news cameras never
come,
you and ya man's singin' every line of my songs.
Where the grams were slung, dudes vanish every
summer,
when the blue vans come, we throw the work and the
can and run.
Where the plan is to get money and move out the jets,
to achieve my main purpose -all night I stood on the set,
five-to-nine, ten-to-four. Still I made straight bets,
now is Neffew the best in the game? Correct.
I'm from the other side, where other guys don't walk too
much, and girls in the hood wouldn't date us -said we
talk too much.
So they went over the bridge and found them dudes to
trust
I don't know what they thought -them dudes is foul just
like us.
I'm from where the beef is inedible, summer times
unforgettable, boosters in abundance, buy a half price
sweater new
Ya word is everything, so everything you said you do,
you did it.
Couldn't talk about it if you ain't with it
I'm from where they'll pull yo' card, and argue all day
about who's the best rap biggie: Tupac or Nas
Where the drugs are involved and problems do evolve,
and we at each others throat for the love of foreign cars
Where dudes catch cases hoping their lawyers argue the
cause,
but most of the time find themselves locked up behind
bars.
That's all.
I'm from where they ball and breed rhyme stars
I'm from San Francisco, boy, I just thought I'll remind
ya'll.

-Neff, Alameda

From The Beat: Great flow! You have a gift for rhymes. We hope that you will keep working on creative ways to describe your neighborhood and your world in your writing. We can't wait to hear more!

What I Do When Someone Close To Me Dies

When someone close to me dies, sometimes I might go
and get a whole R.I.P outfit made with their picture on it.
I usually would only wear it one time, just to the funeral.
Then, right after the funeral, I would go and get the whole
outfit framed and I would take it home and put it on my
wall. Then, every time I look at the frame, it reminds me
of that loved one that I lost.

In the case of my son dying the day after Christmas
of 2006, it was different. When my son died, everything
I did from that day on, I did it for my son. So basically I
changed my life because his death taught me that life is
too short and too precious to let it go to waste. It showed
me that anybody can die at any given time, so you've got
to live life to the fullest while you're living. When my son
died, it hurt my heart.

Everything I do now is in the name of my son. So man,
to all who don't take care of your kids, ya'll need to think
twice and be a part of their life. I regret every minute of
my life that I didn't spend with my son.

-Michael, Alameda

From The Beat: We are deeply sorry for your loss, and your beautiful words move us to tears. Thank you for sharing the wisdom you gained from this tragedy with your fellow Beat readers. We hope that you will live a long and healthy life and know the joys of being a parent again, when the time is right.

Graduate High School

The one thing I've been thinking about is just graduating
from high school. I think about it, and just graduating
would be good so I can at least get a job that pays nice and
live off it. I think if I don't graduate, I won't be shhh in life.
I would be left dead somewhere, because it's nowhere for
you to go without that high school diploma.

You can travel, like go outside the States, and go to
a college down South, so you can see more things. I feel
I just need to graduate, because if I have kids, I at least
want to tell them I accomplished high school and I'm not
a dumb ninja.

-Michael, San Francisco

From The Beat: We can see already that you're "not a dumb ninja." Far from it. You're right about that high school diploma. Without it, it's hard to imagine getting anywhere. But with it, doors can open, even doors to college, which opens even more doors.

What Will Love Feel Like?

What will love feel like?

I always think about what it will feel like. I think
about it everyday. I've never known what it would feel like
to be taken to a baseball game, get my head patted, or
even go home and get a hug.

My fear is that I will never succeed in my life. I would
do anything to see or even talk to my real parents. When
I was little I used to think that when I went around the
corner I would see my mother, but I never saw her.

I always seemed alone in the world. 'Cause I would
die to dance with my mother again.

-Unknown, Alameda

From The Beat: What a beautiful, sad and lovely last line. A heart that could be responsible for such a great piece of writing is a heart that understands love. You have not felt all the love you need yet, it seems, but that doesn't mean you won't still find it. There is an old line that says "In the end the love you take is equal to the love you make." Do you think that could be true? That the more love you send out into the world, the more love you will receive?

Many Things To Accomplish

I have many things I want to accomplish in life. One
thing I want to accomplish in life is to pay my parents
back for being there for me. All the money they wasted
on me for being incarcerated, all their money I spent on
stupid shhh when I didn't have money. I want to give back
to them instead of them giving to me.

Another thing I want to accomplish in life is to be
there for my son and watch him grow up. I want to teach
him right from wrong, be a role model and show him what
life's about. I also want to be there for my family and my
girl.

When I'm incarcerated I can't be there for them when
they need me. I also want to be something in life, not just
another Mexican throwing his life away being locked up
their whole life. I want to help my people, be someone
that can be looked up on, go down in the history books
like my heroes, Cesar Chavez, Emiliano Zapata, Pancho
Villa.

I'm tired of the system putting my people down,
making money off us. That's just a few things I want to
accomplish in life!

-Lil' Hushh, San Francisco

From The Beat: Well said, Lil' Hushh. If "Success is the best revenge," then we hope you achieve your dreams and live up to the principles of those great men, Chavez, Zapata and Villa. We, too, are tired of the system putting your people down and making money off of you — and we're tired of so many of your people (among others) handing their freedom away so willingly! If you can't put a stop to the system, at least you can put a stop to your own continued participation in it.

Missing You

I'm hurt, I'm lonely, I'm really afraid
 I'm mad, I'm angry, filled with rage
 You left me or was you taken
 You kept my life straight now it's shaken
 I can't think what did I do to deserve this
 Everything was fine yesterday, so what did I miss?
 I saw you when you woke up and when you went to bed
 At night
 We were talking about my problems, U said it will be alright
 And gave me a kiss good night
 I was worried about my problems not knowing
 Yours were worse
 I just wish before you left
 I could have said goodbye first
 I know you left but I feel that you're still here
 I don't know how I'm gonna live
 because now I'm facing my biggest fear
 No matter what, I love you and lift your name up
 High
 It's kind of late right now but here is my goodbye
 I think about you day and night
 Sometimes I'm happy Sometimes I'm sad
 It's just the way I feel
 when Grandma left in the pass

- Reggie, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: You said that your grandmother "kept your life straight and now it's shaken", is her death an excuse to mess-up? What happened to your straight life? No one can take away what you two shared, so hold on to those good memories and make the right choices to keep you out of trouble and make her proud.

When Someone Close To Me Dies

I have had a lot of experience with deaths, and just not only friends but also my true loved ones.

The closet person to me that has died, I would have to say, is my grandmother, Princella Jones. Even though I never got to know her very well, I was very mad that she passed. She passed when I was two years old, and every day I think of her. It light weight makes me want to cry. Because I know personally that I would not be where I am right now [without her].

As soon as I leave this place, I'm going to get a tattoo that fills my back up of her name.

Also, I'm going to get a tat of my cousin's name: Alfonte Jackson. One day we were hangin' out, like a regular day, and my cousin loved to do flips, backflips, frontflips, cartwheels, and the whole stuff, but the thing that got me was that he would flip off of buildings, walls, tables, and other things. Well, one day, he decided to run up the wall and backflip, and all of a sudden things didn't go to plan. He ran up the wall and only got half of his backflip. He landed on the top of his head and had a seizure right in front of me. The thing I feel bad about is that I was too frozen to say anything for the first ten minutes. We were at the park. I have a big poster of his face on my wall, also a sweater of Alfonte's. Alfonte and my grandmother: Rest In Peace.

Lil' Jon Jon, Alameda

From The Beat: We have gotten to know you a bit during the past few weeks of workshops, and we are honored that you would open up and write in The Beat about your loss of these two important people in your life. The story about your cousin breaks our hearts. How scary it must have been to be there when he fell. Even though this happened a while ago, it might feel good to talk with a family member or another adult you trust about what happened. You don't need to feel bad or responsible for what happened, it was not your fault. That said, it does take time to heal and to understand. Talking can help. So can writing. Please be good to yourself and honor the memories of these two loved ones in all that you do in life. They would be proud to know the friendly and bright young man you have become.

A Woman's Death

Lying there on that bed
 Dreaming in my head
 A loud yell strikes my mind
 Waking me, looking behind
 My elder crying in sorrow
 As her heart became hollow
 Telling me she is gone going out turning the light on
 seeing her face
 Showed me that taste of loneliness and regrets
 Feeling weak with tears my mind goes blank
 Wondering about the past holding all the tears
 Standing there next to the bed still wishing she can hear
 To be able to know how much she was loved
 Before she went above
 With everyone moving around
 Yelling, crying, screaming all around
 All the sudden every thing goes blurry
 With tears of fury
 Black fills my eyes
 Waking up with a ties
 In the middle at a gathering
 Where everyone is contributing their respect and sadness
 To a loss of a friend just standing there
 Hitting silent cries my mind becomes scrambles
 Not knowing what to feels as time speed up
 Those feelings come up hitting my eyes with tears
 With no one to hear
 Realizing that it's too late
 My mind starts to hate
 Blaming myself for this event
 With nothing to do to prevent
 That death long ago
 Wishing for another chance only to wait for my life to go
 To see her face reunited to tell all the feelings that was never told
 But now I wait here in this cell
 Around this jail
 Waiting and pondering when I will meet her again.

-Potter, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Who is this mystery person that you're talking about in the poem? That person is gone now but it's up to you to keep them person close to your heart. Things like that happen all the time, because it's part of life. It's not necessarily anybody's fault. Fate just works like that sometimes. Maybe you should recite this poem out loud to yourself. It might help you feel better.

Scared Of Leaving The JJC

I am scared of leaving JJC because I am so used to it. I've gotten used to everything here, but I want to leave and move on with my life. I think it's kind of scary, because I am so used to being locked up. Being free would be a lot better, but I will not be used to it.

I have to go to a long-term program, thinking about how it would be like and be half way across California.

It's going to be so important to treat my family good and make every moment good. If we have a last bad moment, then, if one of my family members passed away with a bad moment, then I will have to feel guilty 'til I pass away. I have had a lot of bad moments like that while in JJC.

-Chinese Boy, San Francisco

From The Beat: You are scared of having to deal with the real world as a man and not as a boy — and your fear tells us that you are becoming the adult you know you must be. This fear of using your freedom wisely is not a weakness, but a strength! Yes, regret those bad moments you've been part of, but start creating good moments. Whatever program you are asked to attend, do it with the thought that you can learn from every new experience in life, even when the unknown can be scary to contemplate. We know what you are capable of, and we hope you choose to live up to your capabilities.

RIP

RIP (Rest In Peace) to my big homie, Chedda, and my cousin, Kim. When they passed away, that was my wake up call. "Hey, Panch, this real. They ain't comin' back."

My first response to when my cousin, Kim, passed, I didn't cry until the burial. That messed with my head fo' real, fo' real. But I didn't talk about it to no one. I held my feelings in.

And when Ched passed, it's a mixture of sadness and anger. At that point I was ready to kill. The night of his funeral was the last time I cried. That was the night I cried every tear from my eye. So you know—ride 'til I...

Kim and Ched, at night sometimes I think they probably lookin' down, sayin', "Why is he making these decisions? He don't know how lucky he is to be alive."

-Young Pancho, San Francisco

From The Beat: Yes, Young Pancho, listen to what your friends are telling you from beyond the grave! Life is the most precious gift of all, and it is only ever given one time! It ends quickly enough naturally. Why not live it to its natural end? We appreciate the honesty and raw emotion in this piece, and we hope you can continue to express this pain so eloquently, while at the same time, changing what you need to change in order to live.

Off The Top

It ain't healthy to bottle up your rage
That's what they tell me

So I express my pain over this notebook page

My life is far from straight now tell me who could relate
I reminisce on the days when I would walk through the rain
Pistol hangin' out my waist 'cause these streets are far from safe

Stompin' on turfs where I'm forbidden cause I haven't gave
a damn since the beginning

And I done so much dirt bet the devil cant wait to greet me

War tactics been practiced so no one will defeat me

And on judgment day I pray to the lord to forgive me

Brain washed and educated on Capone and Mr. Nitty

Role models Luciano so I'm lockin' down the whole city

And when the smoke has settled no one will be with me

On my own 'till the end I have no need for a friend

'Cause when the heat gets too hot they gonna turn your ass
in

And momma always said you best protect your skin

Specially in this world full of sin

Where only the strong and wise will win

'Cause God forbid I'll end up dead in the pen

You see the hood don't care what it is you've done or where
the hell you've been

But now straight out the grimmest pits of hell

Comes this mad man spittin' shot gun shells

Turned to a life of violence and over-flown triple beam
scales

Not many options to chose from when all else has failed

Now all we could do is post on the block and wait for them
ships to set sail importin' millions worth in goods mayne

there's money in the hood

Tryin' to fulfill that American dream

And turn this cream into cheese

Only problem is this cheese attracts rats

So be sure to cover up your tracks

'Cause the ones to say they got your back are the ones to
state facts

So grab a jacket cause this game could get cold

Tryin' to find a real family and grow real old!

-Kastro, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We all know that life consist of cold hearted people playing them cold games/ You right, you better off rolling by yourself and being your own gang/ Forget about the fast money cause that's bad for your health/ And nobody can look after you, if you don't look after yo' self/ We ain't sayin' don't stack yo' cheese, you betta stack yo' grip/ But there are all different kind of ways to do it, and you can do it legit/ That way you ain't gotta trip about anybody squealin'/ You should just gotta stay away from all that high risk livin' and drug dealin'/

Handwritten Kiss (RIP Grandpa)

When my grandfather died, I felt like my world fell apart

When my grandfather died, it damn near broke my heart

When I saw him in his coffin, I new it was over

I couldn't feel his presence as I looked down at the head on his
shoulder

Eyes closed, a smile the embalmers must've put on his face

When my grandfather died, I wanted to leave this place, the

smile ripped off my face

But the legacy lives on through his step granddaughter Dawn

Humble, noble, peaceful, loveable he was, and it's because of
me and my family that he lives on.

Through Dawn, through Dawn he lives on

All that he is and all that he was, it lives in me through my
poetry

Moving mountains with what I create via articulate

He lives on in this hand-written kiss.

May his spirit rest in peace.

-Dawn, Alameda

From The Beat: With your poem you breathe life into the memory of your grandfather, but also into the memories of anyone who has ever been lucky enough to have the grace of a wonderful person in their life, if even for a short time. We hope you continue to share your wonderful gift.

Needless, Needles

Needless to say, needles I say, on the streets I stay,

I play mind games, seek riddles, dance in the rain.

It's what destiny says to me, that truly tests the best of me,
confess and we'll see.

We're trespassing to find places to sleep,

cardboard's all that's between us and concrete.

I don't sleep in a tent anymore. I've found front porches,

cardboard boxes, alleyways and parking lots.

I steal only what I need, only take what other people leave.

I live to write but wrote to die.

With unsober mind I lived in spite.

These words are all I've got.

If I didn't have them I'd have no reason to go on.

So I sit here, letting my mind race,

trying to find something to do in this unbearable place.

-Faith, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is remarkable, Faith. Keep the drugs out of your brain and you'll never lack for words. You are a born poet. We don't need to remind you that there are healthier ways to live than you've described in your 'confession'. Stay clean and you'll discover you have lots more than words. We'd like you to send us your writing, wherever you are.

Falling Off

What's up Beat here's something that happens to most
people that are struggling to survive in the dope game.

In da dope game ninja's always fall off

But what can you expect when making money from rocks

You drop the dope and the money when you see the cops

And your heart beats a lil faster every time you sell to a
knock

But you can't be no punk and you gotta survive

And that fast money is your only hope for staying alive.

So what do you do when they take your money and dope

Well to rob someone seems like the only hope.

You run up in the house taking anything expensive

You're wearing no gloves acting kinda reckless

But the quick money that you're making is blocking your
senses

Now you're up in da hall,

...waiting and Desperate.

-Pacman, San Francisco

From The Beat: You took our topic and ran with it like a quarterback going for a touchdown. This is a terrific poem that shows exactly how you can get caught in the quicksand of the game when you take that first step into it. Do you see other choices out there? Ways of seeking out money/jobs that put some cash in your pocket without all the stress?

Why?

Life is cold in certain areas. It truly does suck at some points. There are certain times when you want to just give up on life and just say, "Forget it!" Like me, I've gone through some shhh since I been here, which is juvenile hall in Santa Clara county.

The system I'm in is so messed up! There are so many cracks in this system it's not even funny. I've been in this same unit for about ten months now. It's my first time being locked up, and I'm in this security max unit. This is my first unit and it will be my LAST that I will ever be in.

This place will get to you after a while and it's not even cool. There is just maybe a couple of things that were good that came out of this experience. One of those things is I don't act like how I used to. I've become a little more mature than when I was out.

Family

Then there's my family. My family has been going through worse times because I'm in here. I have five siblings in my family. The oldest is Arthur. He's 26 years old, my brother. He's my best friend. Even though we are eight years apart we have that bond. My brother will always be there for me through thick and thin.

Then there's my older sister. She's blood. Her name is Danielle. She's 24 and just had a baby. My sister's baby is a couple of months now. My family say the baby looks like me when I was a baby. It's weird... well not really. The baby's name is named after me, baby Daniel.

Well, my sister is really supportive since she writes me a lot and I love her, even though she used to beat me up when I was little, ha ha. She was mean, but now she is a very independent woman.

Then there's my lil' brother Joel. He's 12 years old and there's not much to say about him. We never really got along. I think it's 'cause he was younger, but I can say that I love him. I am proud of him. He made it to middle school. It got me happy because I know he is going to succeed in life.

Then there's the woman that will always love me no matter what happens. It's my beautiful mother Christina. My mom has been through a lot with me, to visit me. My mom has never doubted she and me never will. When my mom found out I was using drugs, she tried to help me regain my life, mentally and physically. My mother — I love you.

There's my pops. Not much to say about him. He left when I was two years old, but he comes to visit me and I guess I can I love him. My dad was a druggie and an alcoholic, that's the reason why he left.

That's my family, well, my real family. I also have a stepdad, who's been in my life since I was five years old, and I have two older stepbrothers, but that's like my family. You know, I grew up with them and I love all three of them. They are all supportive in their own little way.

Now that's my family. But then there's me. Well, let me start by saying this, my name is Daniel but

my boys know me as Evек, and the max unit staff and other staff know me as Thirst. So now that you know my name or names, let me tell you a story about a boy who was, but got transformed into a druggie that messed up his life physically and mentally. Here's the story of that boy.

The Beginning

It was July 14, 1989, 7:15 a.m. My parents named me after my father, Daniel Allen Jr. As a young boy growing up in San Jose, there is a lot of drugs where I was growing up. By the time I was two years old, my father was twisted on drugs and alcohol. My mother and father were fighting a lot. That's what I remember when I was little — seeing my mother cry on the kitchen floor for so long.

When I was about two and a half, my mother finally got sick of my father's games, and my mother and father split. For a couple of years I never seen my dad, never. But I started to

get older, my mother thought it would be best to have my father come and pick me up for the day.

Not too soon, my mother met a man, Jose S. When I was five years old, Jose had two boys already, Jose Jr. and Sebastian. Pepe, which is lil' Jose was seven or eight years old at the time, and Sebastian was six years old. Little did I know that these three people were my future family.

I remember when I was young, my older brother wasn't really around. My brother was out doing his own thing, getting caught up. Then it was my sister who was next. She ran away and I remember it was my mother and I who went out to look for her. All of the nights we went out were very long.

When I turned seven, my brother and sister were home. They finally both came back. Once my brother was back, he was smoking weed. For some reason, one day I was out on the porch of my house and my brother was sparking up a joint for him to smoke with his boy. Since I was there, my brother decided to let me try. I got high in one hit and I can say I was trippin'.

When I was eight years old, I started to skateboard. That was my passion. When I was little I wanted to become a pro just like all the famous skaters. I remember my favorite skater, too. It was Donny Barley. I remember my first board was a Barley pro model.

Well, once I got to fifth grade, I had a cool-ass teacher named Mr. Park at Hacienda Elementary. I only remember one week specifically, and it was just crazy, well to me, because I was so young I wasn't going to school for one whole week. That week I was at my house with my older brother and my older sister and it was chaos, people smoking different kinds of drugs.

I remember that week I ditched from elementary school I was trying to get into my bathroom but someone stopped me from going into it. Come to find out there was like 7 people in the bathroom, it was crazy.

I never seen so many people in such a small room. At the end of the week my mother got a call from her work from my school saying I haven't gone to school all week and that they were worried. Damn the look on my mothers face was so distress, she was pissed I remember running to the back of the house and going into my room and seeing a bunch of teenage kids jumping out the window. My mother didn't do much and had a talk that's about it. As I was growing up I really never got disciplined.

When elementary school ended I didn't even know what middle school I was getting into. By the time the first day of school came I entered the grounds of Hoover middle school, a very ghetto school in my opinion. Damn you guys know that feeling you get when you walk towards the entrance of the school, well I hate that feeling It's not a good one to me. Hoover was an experience I would never miss.

I was 12 when I went to my first class after my first day of school I met a lot of new people, people I still talk to till this day, good people. When I was at that school my first year I can say yes I was a square, but for some reason I hit 7th grade I started to get to know more I was becoming popular, I had friends everywhere from stoners to just regular people.

That's when I started to really smoke weed almost every day. I remember making my own pipes out of whatever I could find, this one time there was four of us at my boys house and we just got done smoking and there's always that one person who does something stupid and my boy Hector was trying to be a bad ass and lift about 145 lbs on a bench press. Him being high it was hella funny. Well, he tried to lift it and it fell just fell dead weight on his chest. It was hilarious.

That was a hella funny experience. Back in the day was the best. That's when I was only addicted to weed. It was great...

(To Be Continued...)

-Thirst, Santa Clara

From The Beat: How could this autobiographical epic be anything other than Piece Of the Week? It kept our interest all the way through, and ended the way the best serial writing ends, holding out a tantalizing tease that makes your readers [us] want to read the next chapter.

What Do You See?

What do you see
when you look into
these brown eyes of mine?
Do you see love, hope or fear of some kind?
What do you think goes through
this secretive mind?
All I know is that
you're wasting your time
trying to find out what kind
of person I am.
All you see on the outside
is this scheming little girl,
but what you don't know
might surprise you.
Because on the outside I show
so many laughs,
but inside there are
so many tears.
What you see
is not the real me.
But on the inside,
if you could see,
that would be the real me.

-Lil' Sapita, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Ms Sapita, another sensitive piece about the walls we put up to protect ourselves and how inside you are a different person. The more you write about this inner sweet and sensitive person, the more we begin to see that person shine through on the outside.

One Thing I Want To Accomplish: Contentment

One thing... Well beat, I have one thing I truly want to accomplish and that thing is to live in the lifestyle that I will be content with. I'm not sure what life that is but I have ideas of what that lifestyle would be. You could become a business man and be respected by society and make a lot of money get a beautiful wife and help them with life, but that lifestyle can cause a lot of negative things like being ungrateful and being selfish, hypocritical, greedy and lacking moral respect, especially with my kids.

Or maybe I can live away from society and buy an acre of land in a remote area by a lake and live off the land and animals around me. Staying close to nature and living in a way that allows me to sleep peacefully and wake up excited for life. Living according to the laws of nature without devouring the earth of its materials and polluting it.

Am I the only one who thinks like that?

So would it really make a difference to the world if I were the only one. Surely I am not, right? So what if I become a professor and socialize with intelligent young people with passion burning in them, trying to live life in a positive way and trying to make the world a better place.

I don't know Beat. I don't know what I truly want. Maybe I could be a priest and preach the gospel. But people just believe in it right? They don't know if it's for real. If this was truly the one right way to live life I'm all for it, I don't know yet. I'm still looking. Or maybe being a monk, living life free of suffering and obtaining illumination, living life according to the noble eight fold path, but then again is it the right way? I guess the right way is what you truly believe. I guess I'm still looking. But that is what I truly want to achieve. To live a lifestyle that will truly be happy and content with.

-Viet Tiger, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It takes a great deal of maturity and wisdom to ask these questions - you are digging deep into the question of what is the meaning of life. When you go to college, and we hope you do - because you are a born philosopher. In a perfect world we think we all would like to lead our lives a certain way. Maybe we would all be rich or maybe we would all be poor but rich in faith and happiness. But what would life be if we had the whole table set up for us? Maybe that's what life is all about. Maybe it's about trying to figure out a way to live it to the fullest and be truly content with our selves. Good luck on figuring out. Don't get too exasperated or frustrated because you are still young and you have plenty of life left.

RIP Grandma Cool

Grandma
Thanks for being there for
me
Grandma
Thanks for understanding
me
Grandma
Thanks for accepting my
way of life
Grandma
You never turned your
back on me
Grandma
You never raised your
voice at me
Grandma
You never had to lay hands
on me

Grandma
I'm sorry for
disappointing you
Grandma
I'm sorry for you worrying
about me.
Grandma
I'm sorry for not being
there when you needed me
Grandma
Please look after me now
and I'll make you proud.

-Cd, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a touching piece about your grandma. She sounds like she was a sweet, strong lady. Do you have any of your grandma's characteristics? Make her proud man, don't come to jail. Be the person she saw when she looked at you.

In Loving Memory of Scooby

Hello to all you Beat readers, this gots to be Lizeth once again. The reason why I chose this topic is because I've experienced it.

Well, as for today, I'm going to be writing about someone very close to me that passed away. On Monday December 3, it's going to be one year that my brother got killed in gang violence. I make sure that my brother's legacy lives on. When my brother passed away, I got this nickname tatted on me to show respect to him and because I really wanted it. I also got a t-shirt made that I was wearing the day of his funeral. I share my memories with my friends and I always will remember him for who he was. He also left two daughters behind and I will make sure they know who their father was. My brother was my everything and still is, just thinking about the past makes me stronger and wanting to move on because I know that will make my Scooby very happy. No matter what happens I will always carry you in my heart. Your lil sister Lizeth loves you.

-Lizeth, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thank you so much for sharing all the ways that you mourned your brother's life. But the best advice you have here for others going through the same thing is how you are moving on and doing good with your life. Your brother must be proud of you.

Fear

Hey Beat, today's topic is fear. People have asked me what are my fears and to tell you the truth I don't fear anything.

I've seen so much in my life that nothing scares me anymore. In my life I've watched people get stabbed, shot, beaten etc. I stared death in the face a few times myself. In life I been through so much I grew up in Detroit east side 11 mile, and on the east side of L-A also.

Walking down the street always having to watch my over my shoulder. I just got sick of it and decided that I don't care anymore. I don't care if someone wants to shoot me or rush me all I know is I'm gonna take it like a man if I die.

If I die and I live past 25 I'll be happy. My nickname is Worm. One of the lowest like forms on the planet but you can cut me down and it don't do a thing I just keep multiplying.

-Big Worm, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It's hard growing up rough parts of the City. It don't matter what state, or city really. As long as there is poverty, there will be people jacking fools, selling drugs, murdering, all kinds of crazy shhh. But that doesn't mean that you have to give up on life just yet. You can choose to be around that for the rest of your life or until you die, or you can choose to stay away from it as much as you can and try to be a successful person away from all that negativity. (And we think you're a pretty high life form, by the way!)

The Legacy

When my cousin died, pins were made that said "In memory of Wonderwood" surrounding a picture of him. He has the nickname because he was an incredible dude and he left a legacy. The night of his funeral I just keyed down and listened to his favorite song over and over again. The last words are, "So long and good night."

I had never been more proud to know a person than how proud I was to know him. His legacy still flows within me and it always will. If I live my life like him, I couldn't be happier.

-Friend To Him, San Francisco

From The Beat: We wish you didn't have to have these rituals for death, but we truly admire the desire to "key down" and focus on things important to him. Too often, we read about wilding out when a homie or family member passes, which is more about the person doing it than the one who died.

Scharod's, Law

In 2003, my cousin, Scharod Fleming, passed at the age of fifteen. His death was a movement for our family. My family and I did things to make his legacy a great one. We did things, such as protest from the Fillmore to City Hall and we also got his law passed which is in his memory and is called the Scharod's Law.

-Zene, San Francisco

From The Beat: We really admire you and your family for turning a terrible tragedy into something positive rather than negative. By working to make things better, you are truly honoring the memory of your young cousin. (Scharod's Law was passed in SF in 2004, and requires dance promoters to show what safety and security measures they plan to provide to keep their dances safe.)

To My Mom

I want to thank my mom for being there for me since the first day. Thank you for coming everyday just to come visit me. Thank you for being there and caring for me when I needed you. Thank you for wiping my tears when I cried thinking damn I screwed up this time. Thank you for forgiving me when I got mad and yelled.

But I'm sorry for all the pain I caused. I'm sorry you can't go to sleep knowing that I am locked up. I'm sorry for liking the gang life and always getting into trouble. I'm sorry for making you stay up late waiting for me to come home and sometimes not knowing if I am gonna come home. One day you will just wake up and I'll be home and we will forget I was ever in here. All I want for you is to forgive me and don't worry about me, cause mom, don't worry, I'll be home soon. And don't forget I will always love you.

-Guera, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a very touching piece about your mom. Does she go visit you? Maybe you should tell her in person everything you just told us. We're pretty sure she'll be very happy to hear your apologies, and how you are planning on changing. We hope that you can get over this phase of living the gang life because it's only gonna lead you down the wrong path. Death and jail are the outcomes to that lifestyle. That is only gonna cause your mom more pain. You have an opportunity to change now, to avoid that path, please don't waste it.

Fear

A fear that I have is to fail in life. That is a big fear for me. I want to survive this life. I want to prevail in life. I want to get paid (legally) a lot, have a house, a wife, car, and kids. My fear is to have that deprived from me. Hope my fear won't come true.

-Lil' Roach, San Francisco

From The Beat: Of course, no one can predict the future for any one of us. But we see no reason that your dreams won't come true!

School's The Key

W'assup, Beat Within? One of the things I want to accomplish is start going to school and get a job. I'm really trying to stay out of the halls. I want to finish my one-year probation, for I can stay out of here.

I'm really trying to be with my family, because I really regret that I am locked up. My family is trying to get me out of here, because they say, "Somebody always need another chance in life."

I really trying to get that chance in life, because I really going to change my life around. I ain't trying to do the same old things I was doing in the outs, because those things I was doing, it wasn't really getting me anywhere in my life.

I thought school was boring, but it really ain't, because it could really get you somewhere, like go to college and get a good job. And with that job you can get a house and start raising a family. That's life. Peace out, Beat Within. Late.

-Young Racs, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope you follow through on this, Young Racs, because we think you are 100% correct. Even though school can be boring sometimes (so can work), it pays off big time so it's more than worth it. It's the key to a better future, and we applaud you for seeing that.

Accomplish

One thing I want to accomplish is to get my diploma in Glen Mills. Then I want to go to college when I come back. I want to learn as much as I can while I'm alive. I really want to improve my vocabulary. I want one day to work as a counselor here, so I can tell these kids how messed up this system is. I want to be able to explain these things wisely, like a counselor here does. (Brotha Gibbs.)

-Lil' Roach, San Francisco

From The Beat: Because you want to learn as much as you can, we think you're on a life-long path of expanding your horizons, always seeing something new over the next hill. We admire you a lot for this. Don't let the temptations and shadiness of the world deter you from achieving your goal.

Running Fears

To overcome my fears I hide or pretend
 I'll stab you in your back while you think we friends
 I can't show you who I am because you might laugh
 But I can tell you stories about how I was in the past
 No girlfriend, no friends I can't let anybody get to close

When I let people in I get hurt the most
 I act hard when I'm afraid because I can't run
 I hustle, lie, cheat, steal, but really don't think it's fun
 My fear is a fear but It's not because it's me
 My fear is lettin' people see the real Reggie
 I can't do because I already have a reputation
 My hood thinks It's cool but don't like the time I'm facing

My fear kept my boys free and me in jail
 My bond is a thousand dollars and they won't pay my bail

I'm tryin' to face my fears and come out of my shell
 But it's kind of hard to live
 a good life while livin' hell

Fear is an emotion that I got to control
 Every time I dig deep I fall in a deeper hole

- Reggie, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: You stated, "my fear kept my boys free and me in jail", was it worth it? Being a "follower" has its consequences - you do things for other people and look like a puppet. You said, "they won't pay my bail", were you their entertainment? Facing your fears is a good step towards knowing what's right and wrong, this will point you in the right direction.

Silent Cries

Why when I'm hurt, I cannot cry
 When I know deep down inside
 I'm shedding tears I hide
 The outside of me just wants to look happy
 Look spoiled and filled with so much energy
 I feel a change every day
 A change that tells me I am somebody

I am me
 And I don't have to get satisfaction between the sheets
 I feel the real me coming back

Shy, smart, caring, loved, and yes I'm stubborn
 I'm finished with the big chain around my neck
 Messing with white men 'cause they have the best
 Never will I trade my black brothers over this mess
 It's stress

And it kills me inside.
 That why I cry a silent cry.

-Shany-Bo, Alameda

From The Beat: Your cry is silent no longer, because you've just given it voice in this howl of your emerging consciousness and strength. It is such a danger when we find ourselves abandoning our own people because we think some other group has it "better," and it's amazing to see you awaken to that truth. At the same time, at The Beat we are proud to have people of many cultures and "races" - black, white, Latino, Asian, male, female, young, old, and we believe strongly that underneath, the only real race is the human one. We hope you come to that conclusion too.

Something I Can't Take Back

What's up wit' da Beat? Me, still here. I want to give my deep condolences to the homie will. RIP to his passed-on brother. I didn't know him, but keep your head up Will. He ain't dealing wit' dis pain and sorrow no more.

Something I can't take back is time. That's something everybody wish they could control and take back. While I'm in here that's something I think about all the time. If I could control time, I would go back to the happier days, the days wit' no worries. But I know I would still have to go through the stuff that made me who I am.

I camouflage the way I act. Sometimes I sit back and laugh at what people think about me. For people that know me (but I mean the people know they know what I do), it's like a couple of things I wish I could take back. But that's only stuff I did for no reason. Other things I did had to be done. I just wish I could reverse time. I would never do the stuff I did, just BS though.

But when I get out I got some people I got to see 'bout some bidness. Time I wish I could take back because in here my anger is building. But you would never know it because I could control it well. But I know because it keeps building. I would soon let it go. A lot of people talk mess 'cause I'm locked up, but they don't know I know more about them then they think. I don't like a couple of people in here, so when they read this all I want to tell them is test they nuts and do what they talk about. I don't talk about stuff I do, but if you read this, I wish I could take time back because I would have never kicked it wit' you, been around you, never even acknowledge you, 'cause you know you can't be trusted.

-Gold, San Francisco

From The Beat: First, The Beat wants to thank you for your kind words to Will who is still suffering from the pain of his loss. (It's only the living who suffer, never the dead.) As for your building anger, we hope you find strategies to keep it under control because experience tells us (and we think your fine brain will tell you) that the immediate satisfaction you get from going off on someone — even someone who deserves it — is quickly undone by the dissatisfaction of having to live with the consequences. As to taking back time, wouldn't it be incredible if we could do that. But the only thing you can do with time is live it as it happens. More than a thousand years ago, the Persian poet, Omar Khayyam wrote: "The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ, Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line, Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it."

L-I-F-E

L - Life is not fair but it can be Beautiful...

I - It's up to you what you make it...

F - Fight to achieve your goals

E- Everybody goes through tribulation, but never let your past hold you down your whole life.

At this point and time in life, things are very tough. I'm incarcerated, and in my situation, it's for the best, it's a chance for me to turn my life around...Sometimes we have to change our negatives into positives.

I have developed some long term goals, so upon my release (which will be to a group home) it will be awkward because I've never been to one before. But I'm going to take advantage of the opportunities it provides that can help me achieve these goals.

1. Get my diploma, get further information
2. Get a driver's license
3. Establish a bank account
4. Get a residence
5. Get married

-Renesha, Alameda

From The Beat: Cut this out, keep it. Remember it when you start to feel bad, or discouraged, or like you're about to make the wrong decision, then you can read it and get strength. Because this will reconnect you to your higher goals, and your hopes for - LIFE.

Fear

Fear is the hardest thing for me. I fear being alone without love from anyone. It's like me being in a dark place with nowhere to go, no one to tell me or take my hand and say it's gonna be alright.

My fear makes the best of me sometimes. I lose my breath and start to go crazy 'cause I feel I have lost that person. I have lost the only one that I thought could love me the way I needed to be loved, Dad.

Fear that I'll never see them again, and if I do I fear that they would just walk past me like I was never their family. I hate the word "fear" and the word "love."

Right now they're both taking a toll on my life.

-Teddy, Alameda

From The Beat: Wow. Teddy, you have proven to be as wonderful with your words as you are with your drawing. The place you are in is dark - yes, but then the honesty and clarity, the raw courage you show in describing your emotions, that is part of your own personal light. It is a light that belongs to you, and that you must fight to keep burning, so it can continue to show you your Truth.

Sauce

This should be the life that I want to live,
 but instead I'm steady going crazy.

What I hope to be someday in the future is an RN

Study medication and someday be a doctor

Don't think I'm trying to be proper

You always have to have a back-up plan,

so you can be a show-stopper

Maybe I can find a cure for HIV

And for all those haters out there stop hating

'cause I can't be who I ought to be

unless they stop jocking on my style, B.

But that was all a dream,

till I wake up one day

and became what I seen.

-Tariq, San Francisco

From The Beat: We love the ambitious goals you've set for yourself/To cure disease, to bring community health/Don't let the haters distract you from your aims/While you're curing AIDS, they're playing games.

To Everyone Who Helped Me In Here

First let me start off by giving thanks to the Man above.

Now that I showed my respect, let me thank the ones that was there for me the most. They care for me when I didn't for myself, was there for me when times was hard, believed in me when I didn't believe in myself. I want to thank Ms. Shephard, Ms. Belteny, Ms. Gram, Ms. Hanry, Ms. Taylor, Ms. Loudermilk, Ms. Chatfeild, Ms. Pearls, and Ms. Underwood.

You guys was there for me, was more like a mother to me then my own mother. At the time when you guys went hard on me for the times I messed up. You guys did is out of care to let me know that I had someone that cared even if I didn't care.

I want to thank Ms. Belton, Ms. Chatfeild, and Ms. Willams for helping me to fill out job applications and take steps that need to be taken to start me off and a new life. And Ms. Shepard for giving me books to read to keepme entertained even though I find time to mess up anyways.

I want to thank you also for talking to me when I needed it, giving me advice for the real world as an adult, and to help me over come my bad habits the way I used to get money the illegal way. Thank you for helping me open up my eyes and taking responsibility as a mother.

And at last Ms.Pearls for getting me to know the Word better and God. Thank you all, pray for me this might be my last time hopefully I get out soon.

Lastly, hold on to your dream. Never stop to think you aren't worthy enough of anything. Have faith, hope, and God in your life.

-Kamesha, Alameda

From The Beat: What a graceful and thoughtful farewell note, Kamesha! Remember that the greatest thing you can do for the people who have taken the time with you has been to do well by yourself. Get that job, keep that job, be a loving mom, keep your faith and follow the voice inside you that knows what's right to do.

Accomplishments

Something I wanna accomplish is first, getting out of here, then graduating or getting my school diploma—GED. Then going to college, getting my bachelor's degree, going to cosmetology school, buying my own beauty shop. Doing make up, being a role model to my son.

Really not planning to go back to any jail. Especially now I'm eighteen. Can't be playing with my life no more. Buying a nice home for me and my family. Would love to buy my mother a nice lil' home--just a special spot for her, just for her to feel good. Can really make better choices. Big things in life.

-Monstrita, San Francisco

From The Beat: What wonderful goals you've set for yourself, and a plan to achieve them. Nothing worth having in life is easy, and getting what you want won't be easy either. But we hope that won't stop you!

Same Shhh, Diff Day

Wha's good Beat? You know my response to that — same ol' same ol'. Well, it's getting close to my one-way ticket home. I hope the judge allows me to go home. I'm sick of this place. I miss my family, some friends, my wify and my little warrior.

Once I get out, I'ma do what I got to do to stay outa here such as be home by curfew, pass my drug tests, go to school. And anything else my probation requires. Well I don't got much more to say, so basically all I'm saying is everyone stay up! Ok I'm out.

-Muslim Warrior, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope you keep every promise you make in this piece, because these are the promises that will keep you safe with the family that loves you.

One Bad Night

On the block, forgetting if it's hot, I need to sell these rocks.

Man, I keep giving this lady credit and I keep losing doe in this dice game because I keep hitting.

Now I'm down to my last \$10 and I'm eighteen.

I'm stressing, thinking, and I'm thinking 'bout doing anything,

but I'm not tryna go to the pen.

Man, here she comes but she ain't got no doe.

She came up to me asking for some, but no doe, s o we headed to [another block] and she made a quick dub.

Once she got that for me, that was the end of my bad story.

-H, Alameda

From The Beat: There is a lot of pain in that story: your pain in being so young and broke on the streets and also the pain of the lady who is addicted. Do you plan to stay in this game? Would it be less stressful and safer to get a job? If not, why not?

My Memories

What's up Beat? Man hopefully this my last time writing to you. I'm on my way up out here to a placement.

When my pops died it was so sudden, when I think about it two years later I still can't believe he really gone. When people say they remember that day (a memory)

like it was yesterday. It's like I can see a movie playin' over and over to the exact detail of how it went down.

I'm livin' in a nightmare and I cannot wake up. I always tell myself he didn't die for no reason. Even though his death affected my life in a huge way I still use his death and other family and friends and use that as motivation to make it for the fam. It made me not take life for granted. When it's yo time to go, it's yo time to go. RIP Jr., I'll always miss you.

-El, Alameda

From The Beat: You should use it as motivation to keep pushing strong. Death to the people we love does make us think about our own lives and what we're doing with them. Death is a part of life. We will eventually lose our friends, and relatives either of old age, or incidents that happen in life. But that's the way things go. We can't stop death. We can however prevent gang violence, drunk drivers, all kind of careless and selfish things, that bring pain and for some early death.

Dear Momma

Damn, Mom,

It seem like it was just yesterday

I was your baby boy

Now look at me

I'm older, with no sign of joy

I put you through hell

When I was out there

Running them streets

But my whole plan was to keep

Food on the table

So you could eat

You struggled for nine months

To put me on this earth

But look at how I repay you

But spending all my time on the turf

I know you was tryin' your best

To raise me to be a good kid

You did a damn good job

Raising this kid

-Mike, San Francisco

From The Beat: What a beautiful poem to your mother. Why don't you send it to her?

When My Grandmother Passed

I've only had one person pass that really meant something to me. My Grandmother was like my mom. I would do anything for her. All the good things about me I learned from my Grandma. She was always there for me when I needed her.

When she passed away I cried for the longest time. I didn't know what to do. I felt so alone, so lost. I felt like everything I ever cared about went with her. I haven't been the same since. It's been 6 years and it still hurts to talk about it.

- Julia, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: Do you think your grandmother would be happy if she saw you now? You said, "everything went with her", is that an excuse for why you're in here? You said you learned "all the good things" from her, where did they go? Changing your life and making the right choices would make her proud of you. It's not too late.

When Someone Close Passes....

The last two years of my life have been the worst. In 2005, on June 15, my dad died. In 2007, July 27, my brother died. What do I do?

-Sad Guy (Axel), Santa Clara

From The Beat: Axel, our first suggestion is that you allow yourself to grieve. Those are terrible losses for anyone to endure. In a word - cry. Cry whenever you feel like crying. Cry wherever you are when you feel like crying. Let it out. Don't buy into that nonsense that men don't cry. All human beings cry. It's the most natural response to the kind of pain you're feeling. Crying is the way we humans get the pain out. Another thing we need to say: don't expect all the pain to go away. Why should it? There are losses that each of us will carry with us, always. And loss hurts. You will learn to live with it. But you won't ever forget those losses. Why would you want to? Those were important people in your life. You never want to forget them, even though there is some pain involved. There are good memories, too. To love someone, as you loved your dad and your brother, is to take it all in - the good parts and the bad. So, cry when you need to. Time will help to heal your bruised heart. In the meantime, let tears work their magic.

Fears?

Dear Beat,

You right when you say "we all have fears in life". Some we hide from the world, and some we talk about, but what about the ones we hear? What about the things people see that pump fear into them and they can't talk about, but they also can't hide from either? These are the ways boys and girls should overcome fear growing up. A part of growing up is overlooking your childhood. Overlook the things that scare and scar you physically and mentally.

Mentally, as a kid, things like ghosts would scare you. When you get older, things like death and becoming a ghost scare you. Physically, when a kid falls down, it scars him or her. And all they can think about is not falling again.

-Toney Toney Toney, Alameda

From The Beat: In general, do you think it's better for people to talk about their fears, or is it always better to try to ignore the fears? What are some of the mental or physical scars you carry around with you?

Heights

I am afraid of heights. I've always been afraid of heights. I just get all freaked out and scared. I'm not scared on a plane, but scared when driving on the side of a cliff.

I never been on the side able to go on the Drop Zone in Great America because it is pretty high, but I can do rollercoasters when I'm high. I close my eyes or think of something else.

-J Pizzle, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We know a lot of people that are scared of heights. One of them believe it or not, decided to "conquer" his fear by going skydiving. He said it was more fun that he'd ever had in his life. Would you ever do something like that?

This Dream And This Fear

My fear is mainly about a dream I had one tonight before my brother's birthday. This dream was that me and my brother and my grandma went to a beach, when it really wasn't clear where it was in my dreams but it was a kinda cool place. Me and my brother were swimming in the water and my brother is in a wheel chair and he can't walk so it's harder for him to swim.

After a little while of swimming my grandmother told us to get out of the water. So I did but I wasn't paying very much attention to my brother. My grandma told me to tell him to get out of the water.

I turned around to tell my bra to get out of the water and I seen him getting pulled under the water. There was this kinda machine like shark that bites off his leg and pulled him under. My brother can't feel his legs so he just thought it was the tide. I told him to hurry up and get out at the water. I seen my brother find out what it was that pulled him under and he was trying to swim towards me.

The shark was turning around, I tried to get in the water and help my brother, but something prevented me from going in the water, but it's a dream and for some reason I couldn't get in the water. There was no way for me to help my brother. I was yelling for help but every body disappeared. I couldn't help my brother and he is dying.

I turned around to get help from my grandma but she had this remote control that controlled the shark. She had a smile on her face and then I woke up but that was one of my fears. I just had to think that my grandma would never do that and that's how I overcame that.

-Nightmare, Alameda

From the beat: That's a bad nightmare. But that's a good way to put it. Do you have any advice for other people that are trying to conquer their fears?

RIP Big Bra

I was a young teen and I was in my home town, East Palo Alto, riding my bike.

I had my mom's phone and the doctor called and they was like "hello," and I was like "hello."

They asked, was my mom there and I was like no I have her phone and I was like do you want to leave her a message, and she was like yeah tell her that it is an emergency and come to the hospital fast.

So my mom was at my grandma's house, so I was riding my bike to go tell my mom who just called and we went up there. It was me, my mom, and my cousin. So we was up there and we went to my brother's room and I was at the bed and I took a good look at him and in my head I was like "he's dead."

Then I said to myself, no he's not dead...So we were in the room with the doctor and they was like they have bad news, and my cousin said "I already know what happened." The doctor said it out loud.

They said "Your son had heart failure." and my mom started crying and me and my big cousin went bad in the hospital so my mom started to call people on the phone crying.

And that's my story about my big bra.

- Gutts, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It must have taken incredible strength to sit and break down this tragic day on paper. We cannot even begin to imagine the pain your mother must have felt, or you, or your cousin. Now that a bit of time has passed, would you tell us another story about one day - perhaps a day you spent with your brother earlier in your life, that you remember as a truly wonderful time, one that you think of now to make you smile?

In Loving Memory Carlos The Shyboy

I'm back once again and for the last time. Well, today I'm going to write about a touching subject. A couple of months ago I lost someone that was a good person and didn't deserve to die. I lost a homey.

To tell you the truth, a death has never hurt me but this one did because he was going to be a dad for the first time and that's what he wanted so bad.

I had never really seen my home girl Daisy do good and be happy 'till she got with him, but things happened. The next thing we know, he had died and never got to see his baby but I know he is watching over Daisy and is gonna see his baby be born. He was a person I knew who was just himself and didn't need no one for nothing. He was a YA baby and had just got out and settled his life because he was locked up since 15 to 25, and died at 27.

Well, I know that Carlos will always be remembered for who he was. Just know homey that Daisy is doing good and is gonna be a firme-ass mom.

Well that's it for today Beat, but I do wanna say RIP Carlos and also in loving memory Cesar, Carlos, and Adrian. You will always be remembered.

- Spooky, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a really sad story to hear that your friend had found someone and was happy and then had it all taken away. It is especially sad to hear about someone being locked up for so long and then dying after they get out. Do you think this has to do with them being locked up? How do you make a real change after being institutionalized?



RIP Kristofer Kavangh

On August 9th 2006, my primo died. He was only 19 years old and, while he was driving, he had an aneurism. That's when a blood vessel in your head pops, most of the time you will just die but some people can live.

My primo was the funniest person. I still cry about his death. He was so young – just starting out in life, working at Chuck E. Cheese and McDonald's. He didn't trip 'cause he still got a job.

I will never forget the day that he died. I was on my cell phone with my main home girl and then the house phone rang and my Nana told me he died.

It took me probably a year to really believe that he was gone. You can always get over it.

Do you want to know the key of getting over things? I mean things that really hurt. They key is time. Only time will heal all the hurt.

-Dopey girl, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Another random and senseless death. But you give great advice to everyone out there mourning, time really does seem to heal things – not completely, but somewhat.

Dream

In a dream I had I hold you close
Embracing you with my hands
You gazed at me with eyes full of love
And made me understand
That I was meant to share with you
My heart, my mind, my soul
Then I opened my eyes
And all I see, reality shows I'm alone
But I know that someday you'll be by my side
Cause I know God's just waiting till the time is right
God will you keep me safe from the thunderstorm
When the day is cold will you keep me warm
When the darkness falls will you please shine her the way
God will you let her know that I love her so
That there's no one there, that she's not alone
Just close her eyes and let her know
My heart is beating with hers.

-Ly, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Who inspired you to write this poem? What's her name? Does she know how you feel about her? You should give her this poem and let her read it!

One More Try

It's funny how things don't
Go the way you think.

It's funny how you get
Caught up for everything.

It's also funny not
Knowing what to say when
She comes to you and say is
This true?

But it's not funny when
Everything breaks up and you feel
Sad and mad and say why did
I do this...

If only I could get another chance...
to try again
All over again.

-Baby G, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We hope you get that second chance. Because judging by the tone of this (terrific) poem, we bet you'd take it and make the best of it. Has there been any news, good or bad, since you wrote this? Update us!

Happiness

If I could accomplish anything, it would be happiness, if you think about it houses, money, cars, and stuff like that are not gonna last. Bad things happen: people get locked up, get robbed, go bankrupt; castles made of sand always melt into the sea. Children will always cry when their toys get taken away. If your happiness comes from outside it can be stolen in so many ways.

That's why you've got to take joy in everything around you. Its not about what you have, its your attitude that's important. With a bad attitude everything is bad, and with a good one anything can be good. Just like when Christians say, "turn the other cheek", even pain can be good.

If I could accomplish something else, it would be to make others happy too.

-Monk, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You have a very positive outlook on life! We wish there were more people like you. What you say is true. If you keep a positive attitude good things will come. But if you walk around with a bad attitude expect negative things to happen. Life is what you make of it. You can either be sad and grumpy all day, or happy and enthusiastic about it.

No Helmet, No Brakes

Aye, what up Beat? Well, today I'm gonna be writing about someone close who passed away this summer. It was one of my close homie's lil' brother. His name was Isais. He was just a baby - 8 years old. He was riding his bike down the hill and he had no helmet or no brakes on his bike.

We were chilling at another homie's pad when we got the call saying they couldn't find Isais and a lil' boy had just been hit by a car.

Ten minutes later we got another call saying it was him and he had passed away. My heart dropped. We still have his twin brother with us, so every time I look at him it reminds me of Isais. Love and miss you cutie!

-Lil' Nessa, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It is so hard to lose someone so young, especially to something as unexpected as an accident. Did this make you and your friends want to change your own lives?

RIP G-Ma

My grandma was all I had from my childhood. She took care of me mostly my whole life. She was like my second mom. I loved her as much as I loved my mom.

Sometimes when I'm alone I think of her. When she died I was going to get her name tatted on me on my right arm. But instead I got a big picture painted of her. That picture means the world to me.

I remember the day she died too. I was playing outside and I got stung by a bee. So I went inside to tell my grandma and she was laying down on her bed. I thought she was sleeping. But I started shaking her after and she still didn't wake up. So I called my auntie and she started to cry when she went in my grandma's room.

Later on that day everybody in my family started coming over. But that's all I remember from that day. But that's all I say is that I love you Grandma and you'll always be in my heart.

Rest In Peace Adella Sandoval Feb.28,1911-Aug.28,2004.

-Joseph, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We feel like, by writing this beautiful eulogy, you have gave us a picture of your grandma as special as the one you had painted... that's because each word you write had so much love in it, and your pen became a brush. We're proud to print your piece, which is so full of heart. In this way, your grandmother's spirit lives on. Now go make her proud!

My Homie's Death on the News

I remember back in the days when I was kickin' it with the homies. Some times I could still remember the phone call I got that morning. It was a typical day about to head off to school when my home girl called me crying I was trying to calm her down so I could understand why she was crying. She told me to turn on the TV and watch the news I did and sat here wondering why she asked me to then the house in my background look familiar to me. Then she finally told me saran's gone.

Then it hit me that what I was seeing my friend has died earlier that morning, cut down in his own home, taken from us way too early. It hurts that I did kick it with him the night before. I wish I could have said more to him while he was still here, but I can't change anything now. There's no way I could have predicted this out come so all I have to say is cherish the ones you hold dear. You never know when they're going to be gone. Rest In Peace.

-Ace, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You're right you can't predict the outcome of anybody's life unless they are living their life a certain way. But even then anything can happen. You could get hit by a bus, you could die saving someone's life, the unexpected always seems to happen. How did you deal with your grief? Do you always cherish all your loved ones now that you see that anybody can pass away at any time? Do you ever think about all the good memories that you had with your friend?

My Life

Only 17 years old reminiscing about my life and what the future holds

Sittin' in juvenile hall just waitin' for that phone call
Just to say you're going to county

Damn still thinking why I disappointed my family
They wanted nothing but the best for me and I messed
up testing their loyalty

Getting charged as an adult ain't no joke
Caught a case that will give me a letter instead of
numbers

The only thing I can do is hope and pray it gets better
It seems when I'm locked down the homies ain't around

Maybe they playin' games
But what hurts the most ones chillin' with the sucka
that gave up names
But it's a cold game

When I was first kicking' it with the homies they asked
me

"Why don't you sag your jeans?"

I told them "Cause I'm always on toes waitin' for the
rival teams"

Got smacked with a brick my junior year
Paramedics said I wasn't going to make it but I'm still
here

Always feel safe in my backyard even if rollers show up I
know the cuts by heart

Moms called me a hood rat

I told her maybe a hoodlum but never a rat

Eatin' cheese is poison for me

That's why you won't find me in the witness seat

Movin' bricks of heroin and keys of cain

We some bosses in this game

Knee deep in the game

The only way out is in a box of wood grain

A gangsta's dream and maybe his fame...

-Cd, Santa Clara

From The Beat: That's how you wanna live? Sitting in that cell/ Eating that county food, and wearing country draws ain't living well/ Change your ways now, so you can live to tell/ A tale/ to some other youngsta who wanna follow the footsteps to jail/ or keep going the way you going now and don't ever think twice/ that the fame/ and all the drugs in the game/ ain't worth your life/

Another Day In The Town

Another grimy day livin' in the town
 War in the streets gotta keep on a frown
 Dreams are broken bodies fall to the ground
 Police sirens sounds
 Ambulance an hour later
 Another youth dead is what it said in the paper
 Gang-related homicide he didn't even bang
 Why he'd have a to die, kids playin' wit' thangs
 Then a mom cries, ninjas grow wit' evil ways
 Just livin' the days
 And surviving the night
 Red and blue lights
 Always tryin' to bring you down
 That's how it is growin' up in the town
 Feeling hopeless, so we do what we do
 But better days will come, one day for me and for you.

-Angelo, Alameda

From The Beat: You knock us down once again, because not only do you know how to describe this life, vividly and with your true poet's eye, but you also know how to analyze it, how to understand what's going on beneath the surface. Yes, hopelessness is so much of the reason. So where can you look to for hope? Based on your talent, we find hope in people like you, who show that they have so much heart despite (because of?) what they've been through. So we tell you, we have faith and hope in you. Are we wrong?

Waking Up in A Nightmare

Someone close to me had passed away all, because of drinking and driving.

Me and my friend, which I consider my brother, was drinking at a little gathering at my cousin's pad. We were drinking Heineken and vodka.

Then me and my boy had to go home, he drove up to the gathering, but when we had to leave he said he was too drunk to drive me home and then himself. So I ended up driving his car.

I don't remember exactly what happened after that. I was really drunk as well. I always thought that I drove good drunk or not drunk. But next thing I know I'm waking up in a hospital. I had a bandage on my head and I had a really bad black eye. My arm was in a cast because I had a broken collarbone.

So finally I found out what had happened, the first thing I asked was if my daughter was ok. My baby's mom said that my daughter was fine. They reminded me that me and my homie were in a car accident, they told me he was in critical condition but he would be alright.

Two and a half weeks later. I was in a coma for a week and a half of that. I finally figured out everything that happened. Two and a half weeks go by and I finally leave the hospital. When I get to my grandmas house my homies were there. And the twin of my homie that I got into the car accident with was there. He had a tank top of my homie, my brother, his twin. A picture of him saying love and memories Long Lam Nguyen 3-10-07.

That's how I found out that the message is to say everyone don't drink and drive, 'cause before you know it you can lose a close homie or yourself.

Now I'm on my way to county facing vehicular manslaughter, maybe two years or more prison, but most of all a loss of a brother and guilt to go with it.

-Shawn, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We're so sorry to hear about this tragic incident. We're sorry to hear about your friend. Although you can't bring your friend back, you can teach other people what the outcome could be when you're driving under the influence. Maybe you can tell your story to other people who be doing what you did. 'Cause you know there are plenty of people who drink and drive, and think that nothing bad will happen. People have done it plenty of times to the point where they think they can get away with it all the time. Use this a very valuable lesson and try to tell others not to make the mistakes you made. You might save lives!

The Scariest Night Of My Life

The way I overcome my fears is staring at something.
 My fears is cops pulling me over. My reaction to that is running. That's the first thought that comes to my mind. All I think of when I'm running is if I get caught and I'll suffer the consequences.

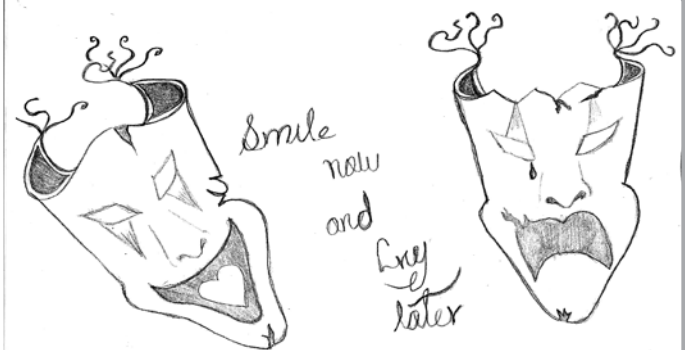
I remember one time me and my homeboys had two stolen cars. It was about 11:45 at night and we were going to a 7-11 to get some munchies because we had all just smoked some weed. As my homie pulled up to the light a cop passed by. My homie burnt out and the cop turned on his sirens and busted a "U"-e. So my homies took off and we turned around.

The cop saw us and followed us and we got stuck in a dead end. Right in front of us was a big fence. We got out and we didn't know what to do. We went on the side of someone's house and hopped their fence to get over the big fence. As we got over the fence two huge pit-bulls were barking at us. They almost bit our feet, but we hopped over just in time. That night we didn't get caught up.

When I went home I thought about what I did and I couldn't sleep the whole night.

-Porky, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Just reading this piece scared us - you're right. And the way you set the scene, starting off with the seeing that one cop drive by and, seeing him make that u-turn, gave us the shivers. If you keep writing, maybe you could be another Stephen King one day! Afterwards, did you make any resolutions, about how to live and whether or not to quit breaking the law? Or did you wake up and forget about how terrified you'd been the night before?



Minimum Wage

Well most people would say they want a college degree but I know my place in society I'm too poor to go to college, so I would say I want to go to community college. Most of my family is poor. Everyone just works a low paying job on minimum wage, so it's important to me to at least get an education at a community college to get a middle class. I'm not sure what I want to major in right now, I just know I want to learn to get paid more, because my family is workin' on minimum wage and we don't have shhhh.

-Xnotorious Viet, Santa Clara

From The Beat: There's a lot of different ways to make money. We're glad to hear that you are going to college and maybe you could get some financial aid. Plus as your writing has shown, you have the intelligence to do what you want, to study what you want, to learn anything you set your mind too. You may even want to consider applying to a four year college, because we think you could succeed there. No one ever died from setting his sights too high.

Money Dreams

As I sit in my cell, reminiscing
 Of all the days I've been missing
 Been coming in and out of Hillcrest
 Since I was fourteen
 All because I had money dreams
 Dreaming of being the biggest hustla on the block
 Pushing big amounts of pure meth and rock
 Dreaming of coming up in this world
 'Cause, like Scarface said
 "The world is yours"
 Getting paid and laid—that was my game
 Selling meth, pills, weed, and cocaine
 I had no shame
 Getting paid the wrong way
 Giving my mom money to help her out with the bills
 But she didn't know it came from selling pills
 Then my dreams came true
 I was now a duffle bag boy
 Getting paid hella loot
 Making so much money
 I didn't even know what to do
 Pushing bags here and there
 I did this on the daily
 Money hungry got me going crazy
 Carrying a piston in my pants
 And a fully auto hidden in plants
 Just in case a fool tried to play me
 Money had me blind
 I didn't see all the consequences of my daily grind
 Didn't think I'll get caught up and do time
 Didn't think that this was hurting my mom and making
 her cry
 Money had me going insane
 I even had my girl playing my game
 Had her scale my sacks
 Telling her to go out in the block and sell this crack
 And she did it
 'Cause she loves me
 But my selfish self
 Didn't do it for love
 I did it for the money
 Why did I make you do this?
 What if you got caught up
 And had to do time
 'Cause of my foolishness?
 As two years went by
 Hardcore drug dealers seen me
 As a down and born hustla
 On my way to shine
 My dreams came true
 I'm almost to the top
 I'm making so much money
 And I ain't gon' stop
 I'ma keep on hustlin'
 'Til my casket drops
 Gonna make me and my family rich
 Then put in money for the block
 But eventually I got caught
 Now I'm in here, doing a long-term sentence
 And as I sit in my cell
 I ask myself this question
 "Will I ever learn my lesson?"
 I'm just a rogue, trying to get paid
 And help out my mom
 But I knew that what I was doing was wrong
 But I was only doing it for a good cause

But you know damn well
 The judge ain't gon' believe me
 She only sees me as a drug-dealing gang member
 She doesn't see how I'm really living
 Been through so much shhh
 That's why I chose the hustlin' game
 I don't do this for the fame
 Like youngstas nowadays do
 I do it for my family and for myself
 But I do it especially for my lil' nephew
 No one will ever understand my life
 I'm just a rogue trying to survive
 So when I'm out I'ma stay on the low and be free
 'Cause I know the task
 And the narcs gon' be lookin' for me
 So for all the hustlas and folks
 Doing time behind bars
 Keep ya heads up high
 And reach for the stars
 So now I'm out
 I'm done writing this poem
 And I'ma leave you with this advice
 Trust no one!

-Smurf

From The Beat: You've put together an epic poem about the motives that lead someone as smart as you into a world that can only end badly. The money you're generating now is not going to your mom or anyone else in your family. Instead, it's supporting the families of people working in the system, while your family is dropping tears for you. You say the judge will only look at the words on a page and won't know what you have suffered through, and that's true. But one thing the judge will know (and you have as much as stated it here) is that whatever your original motives, greed took over, as it always does, forcing out all thoughts of those that love and depend on you as you raked in more and more. We hope you follow your own sound advice when you get out of here, knowing that there is a target on your back. Trust us, the way to build a strong foundation for your own future and that of your family is the old-fashioned way, slow and steady. Trust us!

She's My Everything

She is so special to me
 She's the reason why I live
 She means the world to me
 I love her to death
 She takes away my breath
 I'm locked away from what's mine
 I did the crime
 Now I have to do the time
 I realize dat getting high
 Wasn't worth the time
 Now that I'm away
 From my other half
 She needs me
 But it feels like I need her more
 I didn't give birth to a child
 To be acting all wild
 I feel so lonely and empty
 Without my "lil' girl
 She makes me smile
 I just want the chance
 To be back in her world
 My daughter is my heart and soul
 I hope she forgives me for being away
 When she was seven months old
 For my princess, Jasalea

-Tatiana

From The Beat: We're sorry you're paying the consequences for thinking more about yourself than about your daughter (because if you had been thinking of her, you wouldn't have allowed yourself to be taken from her...). Can you tell us in specific terms what changes you plan to bring about when you get out of here? What will you stop doing? What will you start doin'?

All Around Me People Are Dying

All around me people are dying
 Reasons for crying
 And it's hard to trust, but I keep trying
 Even though people be lying
 Death is surrounding me
 Everywhere I turn
 Approaching faster
 With the flame ready to burn
 Last week a friend was killed
 Blood unjustly spilled
 Another empty void, a life unfulfilled
 I'm locked up, but I'm alive
 Because I've managed to survive
 People try to be hard
 Because they're afraid to look soft
 But few realize our generation
 Is slowly being killed off
 We go to sleep at night
 Thinking we'll be all right
 Unaware we are involved
 In a political fight
 Our enemies all out of sight
 Sitting behind a government desk
 Wondering what move to make next
 In wiping out Generation X
 The government's doing their best
 To make sure all of us are being laid to rest
 We try to mourn the loss
 Of a street savvy boss
 But before we can begin our grieving
 More bodies are found in the street
 Eternally sleeping
 Causing more weeping
 Every day I worry
 Who's gonna be next
 To be found
 On the ground
 With bullet wounds to the chest
 Being forced to take their last breath
 So many people I love
 One after the other
 Are losing their lives
 Going to be with God above
 Unable to say good-bye

*In wiping out
 Generation X
 The government's doing
 their best
 To make sure all of us
 are being laid to rest*

Burdens as big as boulders
 On the backs of these street soldiers
 I always wonder why
 Certain people have to die
 A premature death
 Gasping, struggling
 To breathe their last breath
 A once precious life
 Now there's nothing left
 If only the violence would cease
 Long enough to save some
 From becoming deceased
 But, instead, the murder rate
 Just continues to increase
 Laying more of our friends and family
 In the dirt, six feet deep
 Rest in peace to the ones
 Whose rising sun was forced to set
 From a bullet in a gun
 You may be gone
 But we won't forget

-Friskie

From The Beat: Once again, your great gifts as a poet shine through. We wish your words were not so true, because what you describe is a national disgrace. While our government pours hundreds of millions of dollars into the killing frenzy that is our war in Iraq, we do nothing to address this ongoing war at home that leaves so many in your generation in boxes of one kind or another. All we can say is that some of you will make it through to the other side and that it will be your responsibility to teach the world what you know of this disgrace. You have the intelligence, the sensitivity, and the power of self-expression to be one of those teachers.

Why?

Why do I always get judged because of my size?
 Is it because I'm not da size of those model types?
 Why can't a guy just accept me for me?
 Is it because I'm not all skinny?
 Because I know I'm pretty?
 I've have never been called ugly
 Why do guys always make fun of me?
 And call me names like "Baby D"?
 Because I know I don't look like that lady
 Off dat movie?
 If these guys only know how much I hurt
 And feel pain
 When they call me out ma name
 Will they change?
 Why do I get judged because of my size?
 Does everyone's appearance 'posed ta be the same?
 'Cause if it is, that's a shame
 I am not my appearance
 I am what is inside
 My personal appearance is what I can't hide
 I'm always be me
 Regardless if someone like me or not
 This poem I'm writing right now
 Is something that came to my thought
 And I wanted it to be heard
 That's why it got brought
 Readers, take it how you want
 I'm just bein' real

-LV Princess, San Mateo

From The Beat: Being a teen is a difficult time in our lives, and experience tells us that we often point to others to take the attention off ourselves. When people are self-conscious about themselves (their looks, their brains, their behaviors), they want the focus on someone else, and that's what we think is going on with you. In other words, those that laugh at you are telling us more about themselves (and their own insecurities) than anything about you. To us, it sounds like you have a healthy relationship with your own body — and what a boring world it would be if we all looked about the same!

Not Victimized, But Victorious

Growing up to be a strong woman
 Yes, indeed
 That is me
 Independent, full of fire
 Passionate, articulate, full of desire
 Now eighteen years old
 Oh, so bold, a little cold
 But I'm ready to take on the world
 Maybe I could save another little girl
 From the same pain and strife
 That's been inflicted in my life
 Turmoil below the surface
 But that pain has a purpose
 I used to cry each night
 And ask God, "Why?"
 So I'd cut on myself
 Just wanting to die
 But I managed to stay alive
 And survive
 Neglect, rape and abuse
 Just being used
 I survived
 Maybe to save lives
 And save other little girls
 From the same reasons why I cried
 Why let my insight go to waste?
 Why be just another naked face?
 I'm an adult now, finally grown
 About to be released to live on my own
 Today I registered for college
 It feels really good
 And I'm ready to expand my knowledge
 But at the same time
 I'm kind of upset
 Because the last seven years in custody
 I'm unable to forget
 I'm grieving the loss of my childhood
 Or should I say the lack thereof?
 When all I ever wanted was just some attention
 And genuine love
 But I'm gonna be okay
 I'm gonna be a valuable asset to society
 One day
 Reaching out to others
 Who've been abused and smothered
 For in this moment of clarity
 I understand
 My pain has prepared me
 To become a woman worthy of honor
 My hurt made me stronger
 I am a victim no longer

-Friskie

From The Beat: Amen, Friskie! Before we read this wonderful poem, we already wrote our response to your previous poem — that you have it in you to teach what you know and bring attention to the plight of the abused and unloved young people who don't have the skills and temperament that you do to shine a light on this huge problem. We are so proud of you ("Today I registered for college") because you have endured far more than any child should have to endure, and you have come through the storm with your head high and your shoulders back. Yes, pain has prepared you for this role, but it's also left you vulnerable to false promises of comfort (drugs) and love (men), and so you must walk a careful line, balanced between striding forward and falling back. You inspire a lot of hope for your future. Keep that inspiration alive!

Can't Stop, Won't Stop

Can't stop, won't stop livin' this Speedy Vicious way
 'Cause I'ma stay true to my Raza
 And to this game that I chose to play
 I'm just a menace to society
 At least that's what Judge Diaz likes to say
 Brought up in San Mateo,
 That's where I was born and raised
 I've seen so many things
 Things you only see in dreams
 Thinkin' if my life was different
 Would I fear this kid who screams?
 The screams and cries
 Looking out from the inside
 The kid who grew up quick
 Only to lose his years
 Being brought up tough
 Never to have a fear
 The one who's locked up in my body
 And fights to shed a tear
 Can't stop, won't stop
 That's all he says and hears
 Somos pocos pero locos (We are poor but crazy)
 Livin' in this crazy game
 But we livin' life to the fullest
 And we livin' with no shame
 No emotions and no sorrows
 Livin' like there's no tomorrow
 Gotta pierced black heart
 That's been ripped and torn apart
 I'm tryna see the light
 But I'm stuck here in the dark
 All alone to myself I speak
 And seek the best
 But I'm livin' Speedy Vicious
 So I must stick out my chest
 Doing what I do each day
 Livin' life the way it comes
 Because tomorrow's never promised
 And today is almost done!

-Speedy Vicious

From The Beat: Do you stay true to your Raza by attacking other members of the same Raza? Explain that to us? You may be "staying true" for your gang, but not your raza. From an outsider's point of view, every Latino death at the hands of another Latino, (every Black death at the hands of another Black), it appears you do not even respect your Raza! It's one thing to accept that tired old slogan, "Can't stop won't stop" when you're a child, because children don't know anything yet. But you're not a child any more, and you know quite a lot — including the knowledge that living in a cage is the likely outcome of that activity you are sworn not to stop! Moving from childhood into adulthood is not easy for anyone, but we fear that unless you do it quickly — unless you leave behind childish things, as the Bible puts it — you will never fully what it means to be free. You're very smart, so please give this some serious thought.

*Thinkin' if my life was different
 Would I fear this kid who screams?
 ... The one who's locked up
 in my body
 And fights to shed a tear*

When My Close Peoples Die

Family: If one of my family members die, we would plan it out, how the funeral will be, where it would take place. Being a Tongan, we would have a family gathering at a relative's house the day after a relative passes. The funeral would last a week long. We would have prayers for about three, four days at a family member's. Then, on the fifth day, people from the church will come through and show respects. The sixth day will be a vigil that night. Then, the next day, will be the burial. Ten days later we would have a church service at the house to remember the loved ones.

Homie: When one of the homies pass from the set, we would show up. All the homies will show our respects towards the homie's family. After, we pro'ly meet up, kick it bottoms up for bruh, bruh celebrate his departure. If homie got whopped, then the hit man will be in the streets, high alert for revenge. Rest in peace to the homie. Blunts lit, bottles tip, you're your presence we'll never forget. Much love and mad respect.

-Ant

From The Beat: We thank you for the details of this piece. We feel like we've learned something about the Tongan culture by reading this. When we read about the rituals of a homie's passing, it makes us sad to think that so many have passed that an entire culture of death has been created. When you look at the Tongan way of handling death compared with the way the set handles it, are there differences at the heart of the rituals?

Smile

Smile—something I rarely do
I don't want to be so angry
So I can smile, too
But there's a girl
That used to always make me smile
Mobbin' around late night
Listenin' to oldies
We were together as one
Separate, due to my incarceration
I miss her so much
When I used to look into her eyes
She used to always make me smile
'Cause I knew what we had was real
We was so strong, stronger than steel
My girl, my lady, too
But now she gone
All alone, on her own
We missin' each other
Can't show no weakness
By showing my love
So I pushed her aside
So I wouldn't stress
And just do my time
Her touch, her smell, her words
Everything, I miss
I should be with her
But I'm not
So my throat's dry
And my eyes want to cry
So I mean mug all the time
'Cause she's not here
To make me smile

-Speedy

From The Beat: You don't need us to tell you that your mean mug should be turned inward, because it was your own choices that led to this loss of someone so special. Focus on the future and the changes you know you have to make in order to restore that smile!

I'll Never Leave You Again

I wake up early in the morning', at the crack of dawn
Ninja still tired, so I'm yawnin', and now I'm gone
Tryin' to get my money on strong, so I'm an early riser
Out befo' them other guys, that's the way to profit every time
Can't get too close—my enemies, they see Ghost, they envy me
Plus we beefin' with the Taliban, with casualties
Got stopped in traffic, had a warrant, so they gaffled me
But while I'm gone, watch my business, and my back for me
My enemies think they got me crossed, they ain't knowin'
Ain't no love for player haters; where you cowards goin'?
You paid bail, got me out of jail, home again
I promise not to leave you on your own again
Crystal corks are popped; romantic thoughts are dropped
It's so frantic, but don't panic, 'cause we crossed the top
I found a partner and a rider, a woman and friend
I swear I'll never leave you again, believe me

-Twin

From The Beat: We'd like to believe you when you swear you'd never leave her once you are reunited. But there is so much more in this poem that makes it hard for you to keep this promise. As long as you have "enemies" that you have to deal with, there is every possibility that you'll be writing another sad love poem from behind different walls. Think about it.

Da Homies Make Me Smile

Being able to kick it makes me smile, just laughin' and havin' a good time wit' da homies. It doesn't matter where—da school house, Diablo Park, or even Top of Da Hill—kickin' it back home under the fog makes me smile.

-Trouble

From The Beat: If that's what makes you smile, we advice you to find a way to stay out of places like this so that you can continue to smile...

Time In Jail

I been here for four months, but I have some problem with other persons, because they talk things that are not true.

-Aventura

From The Beat: It's very hard to be locked up with a bunch of people and not have problems with some of them. The real question is how do you handle these problems?

Munchies

When I get out, I want to go to El Grullense in Redwood City.

I'm going to eat so fast I ain't gon' show that food no pity.

I will order so much food, all I'll hear is my mom's rants

And I'ma be walking outta there, not being able to buckle my pants.

-A Homegirl

From The Beat: We know the food's not great in the Hall/But what food do you miss most of them all?/Be careful you don't eat so much you make those scales tip/Or worse, when you bend over, those unbuckled pants may rip!

I'm Sorry Part II

I'm sorry for putting you down for so many years
I recognize the pain I created, as I shed so many tears

I'm gon' through hell as I face my worst fears
Bein' alone in lonely, cold nights

Wishin' I could have just listened to your words
'Cause everything you said was right

You don't ask for too much
You're so special and kind

Time is fastin' forward so fast
I wish it could just rewind

Back to the past
When I was still a little kid

But now I'm almost eighteen
And it just seem dat I'm always sayin' sorry

For everything I did
Wishin' one of dese days I can be forgiven

So I won't regret everything I did
For the rest of the years I live

You say you already forgive me
But I need to forgive myself

So I can release all dis stress
I've always felt

I don't know why
I do the things I do

When you always seem to stick by my side
Especially when I'm always giving you a hard time

You come to my court dates
And even visit me when you can

Which is not always easy
But you still come through

That is why I feel so bad
When I think about the stuff I've done to you

You're very independent
But you always work hard

So our family can maintain stable
You always make sure

We got everything we need
But, yet, I'm switchin' through different channels, like cable

But not on TV, but in TV
I'm sorry for puttin' you down

For so many years
I recognize the pain I created

As I shed so many tears
But I will promise you that 2008

Will be a new and better year
Always

-Princess

From The Beat: Whoever you are expressing this sad apology to obviously deserves it — someone who works hard to keep the family in one piece and who won't abandon you even when your actions cause this person pain and hardship. Of course you want to go back and reclaim your innocent past, but, of course, that is impossible. What you can do now is keep that promise to make 2008 a new and better year. Time to put this person's needs ahead of yours, and to stop doing the things that lead you here and the shedding of so many tears!

I Can't Wait

I can't wait to see my baby
I been here for four months
I called my girl, and she tell me that she miss me
But now I can't wait to see my family and my friends
They are everything for me

-Aventura

From The Beat: If your family and friends are truly "everything" for you, then you will find a way to stay with them when you get out of here. If you choose to do the things that give the system the power to take you from those you love, then it will be obvious that your family and friends were not everything you needed... It's your choice.

Inner Peace

If I could accomplish one thing during my lifetime, I would want to find inner peace. I want to find inner peace with myself so that I am able to have peace with the world and with God. To me, peace is the ability to live life without worry about anything and being free from what society expects you to be. It is being your own person completely and doing what you think is right, not what other people want you to do or what they think is right.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: We wish you had put your name on this piece. We can't disagree with you, although no life is totally free from worry or problems. We also think it's important to be your own person, as long as you don't hurt others.

Why I Smile

I smile when I'm angry
I smile when I cry
I smile when I'm hurting
And about to break down inside
I smile when I'm happy
I laugh when I'm scared
I smile in the midst of my anxiety
So no one is aware
I could be in agony
Dying inside
But all the while, I smile
'Cause I can't put down my pride
I smile when I'm sad
I won't give myself permission to feel bad
So as not to be had
I smile as I drop tears
Running, hiding from my fears
I smile, I laugh, I cry
Yet no one knows what's really going on inside
'Cause if no one knows you're hurting
If no one knows you're in pain
Then they can't judge you
Or say you're deserving
They can't see I'm going insane
Trapped in the rain
Full of disdain

-Friskie

From The Beat: Your poetry veers from depressed and despondent to upbeat and forward looking. Of course, we encourage the upbeat Friskie moving forward with your life. The things that have trapped you in a kind of recurring nightmare do not have to keep you "full of disdain." Even though you cannot separate yourself from your past, it doesn't define your future. That's why we want you to focus all your considerable energy and abilities on what lies ahead — college, stability, a regular job, a family, a life.

Goin' To College

Yeah, what it really so wit' da Beat? Yes, as you know, ya girl is leaving in twenty-eight more days and I'm gettin' off probation so quick, so fast, like da NASCAR. Ya girl gone like green lights and plus I'm gettin' released on my birthday, January 3rd.

I'ma be on a whole new hype for the new year, doing big thangs. I'ma go to Job Corps and get my high school diploma and find my career and get settled in college, which I plan to go to—a two-year community college, then two years in State University in college, which I don't know which one yet, 'cause I don't know if I want ta go to college in San Francisco or somewhere outta state. But I'ma get to it.

Plus, in a couple of months, I'm finta "buy" my own "house," not rent but buy, 'cause ma uncle is a manager in real estate, so I got it good. So I'ma go 'head and keep my head up and stay positive.

-Princess

From The Beat: We admire your positive outlook, and strongly encourage you to follow through on your plans to finish school and get a college education. We hope you do get to buy that house, because home ownership gives you a stake in the community you live in and in the future. But don't take it too fast. Let your uncle guide you through this process, and don't jump in before you're ready. Good luck!

Happy Times An' Sad Times

What makes me smile is seeing my homies alive
What makes me sad is seeing da fam-bam strive
What makes me smile is kicking it with da homies
Not worried about nothing, not giving a damn
What makes me sad is all these fake people all around
Claiming they down one minute an' da next they on da stand
Pointing you out
What makes me happy is to have some homies an' fam
Dat are down for whatever
Never abandoning me (ride or die)
What makes me sad is I wear my homies' faces on a RIP tee
What makes me happy is having people dat care, dat expect more
What makes me sad is all da drama I'm being faced with
It seems nobody cares if I live or I die in da daylight
What makes me happy is knowing I'm worth more
An' knowing I got a good head over my shoulders
What makes me sad is dat da life dat I live has been tough
But I always remember ('Tough times don't last but tough people do)
What makes me happy is dat I have hope an' dreams
An' I'm a strong female, growing up in the 'hood
What makes me sad is dat everybody can't congratulate
They always hate
'Cause I'm doing it live
What makes me happy is dat I made it
An' I'm still here
What makes me sad is dat people wanna take my life
What makes me happy is I'm untouchable

-Giggles

From The Beat: You are absolutely wrong about one thing, at least: You are not untouchable, because nobody is! But you are also right about one thing at least: you do have a good head over your shoulders. So, how are you going to use that gift (that not everybody is blessed with) to redefine your future so that it doesn't include giving up so much of yourself to a cold and uncaring system? Yes, you made it and you are still here, but that's not a guarantee for tomorrow. So, when you think about tomorrow, is it the "ride or die" Giggles that will carve a future of crime and punishment, or is it the "hopes and dreams" Giggles that will prevail? One way leads to freedom; one way leads to jail!

Crime

Crime always has a ninja makin' bad choices. Shhh, I don't even say shhh about what might happen, but I think about that short time again. Yeah, talkin' 'bout I be chasin' that fast cash, tryin' to get it, how I live, mane, fa real. Life too short to just let it fly right by. Yeah, talkin' 'bout not this lifetime. Never.

Ninjas that be runnin' da streets nowadays is punks, mane, fa real. These dudes talk a real big game, but ain't did shhh. They scare, but if you scared to die, then you never gone get a chance to live life. Yeah, talkin' 'bout life has to be cherished, so get wit' it or get lost.

-Kabb

From The Beat: We combined your two pieces into one, because, frankly, we don't think either one had much to say. So, you're chasing fast cash (and never mind that a bullet came within an inch or two of either killing you or turning you into a vegetable). So, you see big-talking kids who aren't as bad as you are. You're going to have to write something deeper than this to impress us.

This Dirty Game

Block parties in the projects
Lasting way past daylight
A young ninja learned to break night
Used to play fight with my homies
But they stuck in the pen
I send them ends, but it's tough on a friend
In my mind, I see the same (fools) balling
Alcohol will make a lazy ninja slip and fall
Miss his call
I know the young ninjas understand this
Growin' up in this world where everything is scandalous
I reminisce on the fast times, past crimes
Tryin' to cop a slice of pizza with my last dime
Can't explain just what attracts me to this dirty game
Gold chains, some extra change, and the street fame
And what's strange is everybody knows my name
Swear they all know me
And lots of cash make a ninja change
I hit the green just to maintain
Feelin' pain
For all the ninjas that I lost to the game
On my block

-Twin

From The Beat: It's nice to be known, for good or for bad/But if you're gone, how long will they feel sad?/Street fame, gold chains, hot dames — they're great while they last/But too soon (just like now) they become things of the past/What you say about how you got here is true/But where you go from here, ah, that is up to you!

The Way I Over Come Anything

The way I over come anything is to accept it and to use it to your own strength. Some things I always remember is that God has never put anything in front of you that you can't handle.

Another thing is that I always have control all of my situations and nothing is what it seems. And the last thing is everything is everything, so my eyes show no fear to no man or anything.

And I really don't care if who ever is reading this and know me think they know me saying oh that ninja a sucka. Just remember you ain't never ran up and it's on out here and we not gone. One more thing --it's not Tone Tone no more. It's Tony.

-Tony

From The Beat: Ok Tony, we've learned your new name and from now on we'll always remember to make that your signature. Like your name, your life is under your control, a lot more than you might have realized. So now that you know this, what will you do to control your life and give it the outcome you want?

Your Mind is Twisted

Your mind is twisted. You got thought but you're confused.

What is life?

Whether you putting it down for a cause
Or all about money hustling on and off the block
Or just living the life how it goes
Either way it gets twisted

So ask yourself is this the life you want to live?

It could be a yes or no I can only answer:

"your own twisted thoughts."

-Mousie

From The Beat: You sure do show how a person's mind can get twisted - but now, how do you get it untwisted? What does it take to make your mind see clearly, and to be able to make it's own true path in whatever direction it wants to go in?

I Wanna Accomplish Being Me

One thing I want to accomplish is to get along with my mama.

And I wanna get along with my brother and sister.
I wanna accomplish not running away from placement.
I wanna accomplish not running away and running the streets

I want to accomplish believing in God and accomplish not coming back to Juvenile Hall.

I just wanna accomplish being me.

-Star

From The Beat: We hope you remember what you wrote here, because these are all goals that are completely attainable - things you have a right to, things we hope you strive for. What do you think it will take to help you accomplish these things?

Down For Mine

Down for my shhh, 'till the day I die. Getting paid, getting laid, got money to flip,

take a trip state to state, and I don't even trip.

I'm a real Mexicano, always feeling malo, no me importe de donde vengas o que repersentas rifare con mis ermanos de califaztlan chicano mexicano.

(I don't care where you come from or what you represent, I represent California here with my brothers. I'm Chicano, Mexicano) That's what I'm all about.

-Smiley

From The Beat: It's cool to be proud of your heritage, but it doesn't have to mean a life of crime! What are some other things that make you proud to be Mexican?

Because Of Who I Am

Because of who I am, I never let myself fall

I am strong and build my own wall

I carry so much pain, but I won't fall

Because of who I am, I stand tall

Because of who I am I know these streets don't build me

I build myself that lets me know who control me

As a black young lady my life feels short

Because of who I am indeed some support.

-Shany-Bo

From The Beat: When we read this, we feel the same confidence in you that you show in your face. Your pride, your confidence, and yes - your pain too - they all shine in your words of defiance. And it takes strength to say that you need support - we all do. No man, or woman, is an island. Bravo for another great poem!

I Sit Here

I sit here thinking of everything I've done wrong,
And I ask the Lord to forgive me, hoping that one day He will.

I sit here in this bored dim room. Only thing that isn't boring

Is reading and writing.

I sit here thinking of the most important thing in my life... my family. Thinking, what are they doing right now?

I sit here thinking, what am I going to do when I get out, and is it

going to be positive?

I sit here thinking, am I going to have a family of my own, or am I going to get married?

I sit here thinking of all of my haters and that I love them

I sit here and reminisce of me and my baby boy and what we used to do and all the fun we use to have

I sit here thinking if my baby still love me...

God knows I still love her.

I sit here.

-Clayton

From The Beat: We love the way this poem moves - your body is stuck ("I sit here") but your mind continues to roam free, thinking about your past, your future, your hopes, your fears... and of course the people you love most. As for your questions about the future - what is your answer?

Too Many Goals

I want to one day quit doing bad things that I'm doing and do the good. I have a lot - well, too many goals I want to accomplish. I hope to one day be a stronger woman, than I already am. I've been through a lot of things and hopefully I can overcome them.

I hope to soon one day have my own business and be a motivational speaker to girls out there exposed to the game, and hopefully help them understand that life is too short to waste. I want to help them want to be something in life, and through all the hurt and pain I've been through, I'll write a book for girls to read who've been through my kind of troubles.

But I know I can change, and I'll show people, instead of telling them. But one day I'll have the life I want to live, and everyone will see, that I have changed. And let me tell you something, this is only temporary, so keep yo' head up, and always put God first.

-Arabian Goddess

From The Beat: There's no such thing as too many goals, and we love every single one that you've set for yourself! There's no better time to start writing that book than right now, and we would be honored to print your first chapter in the pages of The Beat Within! So step up and share your stories and experiences. Be the teacher you are, starting today!

A Part of Me Passed Too

When someone close to me passes, I feel like a part of me passed too, 'cause I was so close to them, and nothing will never be the same.

Because that person played a big part in my life, and also sometimes I feel like I don't want to go outside because they not here with me to stunt on these punks out here.

So now I just go on with my life like nothing ever happened when it really did ...so that's how I feel and now it ain't making shhh no better, 'cause I'm locked up. But when I get out I'm 'bout to be on it.

-Lil' Gweazy

From The Beat: As you say in this powerful piece, when you lose a person you love, a part of you goes with them, but if you let the love for them stay in your heart, then a part of them stays with you too - the best part. How can you live in a way that honors the best in your loved ones?

Shawny Bo Weekly Report

Man, this young Shawny Bo and today is my lil' brother's birthday and Sunday was my mama's and tomorrow is my grandma's and my aunt's. So you already know I'm 'bout dumb ass mad. But at least I was able to get a T. R. (temporary release) for Thanksgiving. And now I only have twenty-three more days left, so I really ain't trippin'. I got a fresh cut and it wasn't a county cut, -a real cut! But when I went home, I found out a bunch of new shhh done happened, like new funk with people we was cool wit' before I got here. A lot of my ninjas are going to the Y [CYA] or to the pen. One is going for life. 'Aight, I'm out.

-Young Shawny Bo

From The Beat: It sounds like your visit home was an eye-opener. You got to enjoy the good stuff like a decent haircut and seeing your family, but it must have made you worry to see friends getting locked up and new feuds starting. So, what do you make of all this? We suggest you take a good look at yourself and the people you choose to be with. You see your patnas looking at serious time, but you don't seem to want to quit the game. What would it take for you to quit and reclaim your freedom forever? Do you think it's possible?

From Stealing Candy to Stealing Cars

I knew you since I was two

We was kicking it just me and you

From stealing candy to stealing cars

We was locked up together behind bars

We both had an Asian pride mentality

How you died was a fatality

I remember us both getting high

Even though you're dead you will always be alive

Rest In Paradise

Joe Lui.

-Korean Pride

From The Beat: Thank you for bringing your boy's memory to these pages, it's that kind of love that doesn't just keep him a little bit alive but also the best part of all of us.

Stuck

Locked up, they won't let me out

Stuck in jail like a root in a seed that just won't sprout

Sometimes I just wanna shout

Kick, scream, rip, pull, and tear my hair

I'm locked up, they won't let me out

-Aundre

From The Beat: We bet everyone who writes for The Beat can feel what you're saying... being locked down is against everything that human nature is about. We were meant to be free. So now that you know how much you hate it, what will you do to make sure you are never locked up again?

I Want To Finish School

One thing I want to accomplish is school but at the moment I'm not in school. I would like to go back and finish school.

-Patrick

From The Beat: This is a worthy goal, we know you can achieve it if you wish. Are you in school while you are incarcerated? Do you have a teacher you respect who cares about your education?

Face Your Fears Head On

To overcome your fears you got to face them head on.

I used to think I was the hardest person in the town.

I felt like I see anyone who flex up on me.

And although I felt like that I only feared

One man and that's God and I'll never face him head on.

-Lil' C

From The Beat: We'd also add - to this powerful and strongly -stated piece - that one of the greatest "people" you will ever face is the one you see in the mirror. That's where you will see the greatest power, the greatest weakness, the greatest joy, the greatest sorrow. What do you "face" when you look in the mirror?

Journey To Freedom

Locked up,

Stressful, destructive

Crying, screaming, lying

Let us be free

Opening, believing, changing

Joyful, remorseful

What I'm saying is be FREE!!

-Bra Bra

From The Beat: Yes! There is so much truth in this short poem, and so much life and joy in it! Our pages are so often filled with tales of darkness, it's a joy to print something with this much life and hope in it.

RIP Ron Ron

I miss you cousin, you was hella crazy when you was alive. I miss the way you would say "Lil' cousin, be cool." I miss you on the block. Everybody miss you hella much.

I know you in a better place now. Everybody be respectful - when people say they know you they be lying out they neck. Cousin I wish with all my heart you was back. Rest In Peace.

-New New

From The Beat: We say this so often it makes us feel like a CD on skip, but truthfully - what can we do, all of us, to honor his memory, and to end these tragic deaths that are sweeping through the community? What we can we do, working together, to bring peace to our streets, to keep our children safe?

Freely

Where to look?

To the stars,

When to speak?

When you please,

Who to love?

Me myself and I,

Where to go?

Where ever you please,

How to live?

Freely.

-Sexy and Sophisticated

From The Beat: This isn't just a poem, it's also a statement on how we should live and how we should begin our journey in this world. We hope to see more of these "slices of life" from you - and more of your answers, and questions.

Money and Success

What I accomplished in my life is making lots of money, and being successful, by doing. That is, having a job. Well, what money can do is keep us living and surviving to get what we need. I don't have much to say, but that's what I want to accomplish in my life -- making lots of money and being successful.

-Run

From The Beat: How will you meet this goal. People tend to be most successful, both financially and emotionally, when they have jobs that they really like -- where they can put their talents to use. So tell us, what are your greatest talents?

Rest In Peace, Michael Price

Just recently I was on the outs with my friends and family when one of my friends told me that my friend Michael had gotten killed at the mall with his girlfriend by some hyphy youngstas who were arguing about how slow him and his girlfriend were going on the escalator. Here is a rap I wrote about it:

RIP Mike, why he had to die?

They had to get the kid 'cause he was so fly
Wake up in the morning, change my life, I try

Violence ain't the answer

So people wonder why

Educate yo' mind and elevate yo' game

So maybe one day you can gain a little fame

But people kind of crazy

They don't feel me, they insane

RIP Mike, you know the game

-Junior F Baby

From The Beat: What kind of world are we living in when a young man gets killed for riding too slow on an escalator? This is tragic, and it's scary how many young people are so full of uncontrollable hate. We hope that you will take serious steps in your life to get away from the violence and the hate.

I'm Thankful To Wake Up Every Morning

Thinking about how to do better myself. Also finding new ways to deal with situations. How to keep myself out of trouble, such as new hobbies. I learn to think before I do. Because the decision I made put me in Juvenile Hall. I think twice before I respond, 'cause I love my freedom. And I know this place isn't for me.

I know I'm a highly intelligent kid. The decision in the past wasn't right. Now I learned my lesson and I never want to put myself back in Juvenile Hall. I learned that I took my freedom for granted. Juvenile Hall makes me realize I need to focus more on school.

-Carlito

From The Beat: You know the old saying, "Every cloud has a silver lining?" It means that even hard as-- reality checks and lessons, like doing time in the Hall, can give you new ideas of how to live your life and enjoy your freedom. School can help!

Getting Out

I can't wait until February 14, 2008 because I have to do 90 days in here. But I'm going to have my baby in May 24th 25th or 28th my baby is due and I am going to go to my house. But I am back because I turned myself in because I just don't want the police to tear my house up so I just turn myself in.

-Baby Thickness

From The Beat: We are so happy to hear that you will be out by the time you are a mother. Are you nervous? Excited? Tell us all about your plans for yourself and your baby!

About My Stay In Juvenile Hall with Ms. Wingate, Mr. Winston, Mr. Megee, Mr. Lateun, And Last But Not Least, Thomas

This is about my stay at Juvenile Hall. This is how it is in here...

I was in the intake unit at first and I was hella mad coming back, but I knew that I was coming back because I ran from camp and I was doing hella shhh, like hella robberies.

This is my second time here and I have finally changed my life. Ms. Wingate changed it for me because she gave me a chance to make top citizen and I was on it for awhile, then Winston started getting on me, giving me discipline, so that made me want to change. We do a lot of LME and we get a lot of chances, but if you get yourself labeled, it is over for you.

All the staffs really be helping you a lot but Mr. Magee, he's hella funny and gives chances and then he'll burn you. Then, somebody will get mad and say "what did I do?!" If you argue, it's bad. I got to wrap it up now. Thank you.

-Derik

From The Beat: Do you think the staff members are fair, or do they play favorites? It sounds like the discipline and structure really helped you. Do you think this is true for most kids? Are there things you learned in the hall that you plan to use or think about on the outs?

I'm Here Again!

I just got locked up a couple of hours ago.

The boys surrounded my house like I had murdered somebody, but really I only had a warrant ...a warrant that I didn't even know about. That's the messed up part.

So now I'm in here again, and my mind wanders... wondering where did I go wrong. Everything was going so well. I was going to school, taking GED class, working but now all the effort I put into that has gone down the drain.

I feel like it was all a waste of my time, but I know in the back of my mind that it's not the end I still got hope in myself and I know not to give up on myself also anybody else in the hall just keep your head up and don't give up on yourself.

-Ramona

From The Beat: We really admire you for what you write in this piece. You've just been through a traumatic experience -- literally hours -- before we came in. And you're still able to focus on the positive and pay attention to that wise voice in the "back" of your mind. Sure, it's a setback, but you are showing grace under pressure, and you'll get through this and stay on your path, so long as you keep doing the good things you were doing on the outs!

Leaving the Old Life Behind

The things that I really want to accomplish are going to college and completing it. After that I want to get a good job and go somewhere far, and buy me my own house.

The hard thing to my goal is leaving my family and friends who aren't trying to be better in life. Although they wish the best for me it's just not something they prefer in life.

If I decide to attend college somewhere far it may be a challenge for me because I don't have very much guidance. With all my concerns I still will accomplish my goals with or without anyone else.

-Ricoya

From The Beat: Sometimes we have to leave our loved ones behind -- temporarily -- in order to find ourselves. The stronger you get, maybe the easier it will be for you to come back and help them...but in the meantime you are making a very brave decision to do what you need to do to grow and mature. Where would you want to go to school? Where would you want to live?

Think Before You Do!

Think before you do, 'cause this system is making a lot of money off us and we ain't the ones paying up, it's our (familia) family. Our dads, or our moms, paying up. That check that your parents work hard to put clothes on your backs and a meal, also a roof over your heads. Wake up and smell the fresh air: our parents pay all this money for you, 'cause you in jail, and you ain't eating good, you ain't sleeping how you want to, you can't even eat when you want to. So all this hard work your parents have to do is because someone is telling their son they can't do this, can't do that. All this stuff you can't do and your parents are working harder.

-Young Voice

From The Beat: We share your anger, seeing young people getting locked up. We hope you can take your own advice and not come back to juvenile hall. You will make your loved ones proud, but more importantly you would make yourself proud.

Being A Man

Most young boys grow up with the intent of being a man. Some don't realize that becoming a man has responsibilities and business that has to be taken care of.

A little boy will never grow to be a man if he doesn't leave his childish ways behind. That may mean leaving friends behind or getting rid of old habits, but it's necessary to be successful in being a man.

-Harold

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing this wise advice with The Beat. What kind of career would you like to have when you're older? What do you think will be your biggest challenge in achieving that dream?

When Someone Close To You Passes

When someone in my family dies, a whole part of my life dies with that family member.

See, where I'm from, I come, a young gang member banging a proud life.

The streets call me Midget. When someone dies that's really close to me, a part of me dies with him. I see my life as just a rolling roulette. One day, I will earn my respect and stripes. One day, I either lose my life or my patna's life. It's a cold world I live in, but the only reason why I keep my head up and watch my back from them play-hating people is that I wouldn't want to die and let my family go to my funeral so young.

-Midget

From The Beat: It is a cold life. Why do you feel like it's the only option for you? What if you end up in the pen? The pen is as cold, if not colder, than the streets. We hope that you will think more about the choices you have made and the kind of life you want for yourself and for your family. Your choices affect innocent people.

Hard To Live When Someone Close To You Passes

When someone close to me pass away it's like how can you go on living my life when I know someone close to me just left this world and never came back again. It's like how can I sleep, eat, or think but I know life goes on.

That's why for memories we get tatted, t-shirts made and the legacy of their name lives on. What if you can't die that's the question?

-T. Helton

From the Beat: That's a real question right there. How do we gather up enough strength and energy to keep moving on? But you right we have to keep pushing. Death is a part of life. We're gonna lose the ones we love sooner or later. Whether it be to accidents, natural cause, or just pure fate. We have to be strong.

Thinking About My Baby

What's up, Beat Within? Today I'm going to be talking about missing my girlfriend. First off, I want to give a shout-out to you, Ashley baby. I just want to let you know that I miss you.

Thinking 'bout you
Day by day I'm thinking about you
If I was on the outs what would I do?

I know I would be with you
To give you my all
To take you shopping at the mall
Thinking about you

Day by day
Every day I miss your pretty face
Wish I could see your pretty smile

Thinking 'bout one day I would let you have my child

- Lil' Tf

From The Beat: What a sweet love poem! We hope you and your girl will hold off on becoming parents until you are done with high school or get your GED, and have steady jobs. Love is priceless, but kids are expensive! Take things slow and you won't regret it.

Man Please!

You had me, now I'm gone
All because of the simple fact you did me wrong
I'm not a quarter so I can't be flipped
I'm not a dollar so I can't be ripped
I'm damn sho' not the ground so I refuse to let you walk all over me
Boy you must have forgot my name is the baddest and best believe
I'm the Queen Bee that runs the king
Who is over the prince, who is over the princess
Just in case you lose my point is I run the whole set
And I make the runs, and waiting for the time that they break
And who ever break --
Will be sure to feel the baddest earth quake.

-Da Baddest

From The Beat: "I am woman, hear me roar!" This could be like a battle anthem for anyone who has ever been wronged by someone they loved... or thought they loved. You might need to change your name from the Da Baddest to Da Bestest! But this talk about runs and sets is, we hope, just a figure of speech. Because we want to see you run far, not slam up in a one end street!

I Haven't Heard From Her In A While

The last months been kind of hard without her.
I used to hear from her everyday, morning, evening and night.

My day was never complete without her.
Now I think I'm going crazy as I sit in my room and think about her.
I can't see or talk to her and I just wish she only knew how much I miss her.

To her, I just disappeared and remained unheard of.
She has no idea I'm locked up and I wish she at least knew that.

Me making stupid decisions and getting locked up could cost me the girl of my dreams.

Man, life can be tough when you don't have control sometimes.

-Harold

From The Beat: That is so true, and it is a difficult lesson to learn at any age. We will hope for the best and that you can be reunited with your girl soon.

A College Degree

One thing I'd like to accomplish in life is to get a college degree. I'd like to get a college degree to make my family happy and to show the people that doubted me that I can do something positive.

If you get a college degree, then you open up a lot of opportunities for yourself instead of limiting your possibilities. You can get a good job and make the type of money that you see people making on T.V. With a good degree you can do anything you want and help others in need.

If I do make it to college, I like to major in music. But I think my down-fall is going to be the decisions that I've made to get me in the situations I'm in now. But I plan on getting there one day.

-Lil' Mikey

From The Beat: You are realistic about the fact that you have some work to do to get through your sentence and to gain the trust of your family again, but you also have dreams for yourself! Please show this piece to your P.O. so that he or she can help you get back into school and on the right track. You deserve support as you pursue your goals.

Getting Off Probation

What I want to accomplish in life is to get off probation. Get a job, stop comin' to jail. I would want to accomplish this because I have been getting into trouble for many years now. I hate coming in and out of jail all the time. It not only affects me it affects the ones that love me and are very close to me. I would want to beat probation the most because I've been on it for a couple of years now. I've been wanting a job for about a year now so I can start making a lil' money so I can start saving to get my own house, and to support me and my girl.

I want to live my life like it used to be. Yeah I still got high, but I didn't have to worry about the boys coming around the corner. Man I'm tellin' you this stuff ain't right for me, I'm gonna go to placement. I ain't gonna run, I'm gonna do my program and start fresh and be happy. You feel me?

-Et

From The Beat: We feel you man. You need to stop running and do your program first, before you can accomplish the rest of your goals. Those are some pretty good goals. Go to your program and handle your business. Before you decide to do anything stupid stop and think about your goals. We wish you luck!

I'm Stuck When Someone Close To You Passes

When someone close to me passes, I don't know what to do. My mind goes blank and it ain't no telling what's gonna happen or what I'm gonna do. It will be hard for me to think. But when it happens, I try to help myself think the right way. Sometimes it depends on how it happens. Like my best friend, he was like my big brother. He got killed by the police. So by that happening, what can I do to the police? Nothing, so that's why I have to take it as a loss of my brother.

I got an RIP on my arm. That's how I talk to him and remember him. The things we did together were like, hanging out, playing football. We had a lot to talk about to each other, we kept to ourselves. We went to places that we never thought we would go to. On Friday nights, we would go out and have fun to stay out of doing bad things. That's all I can say about him on paper.

-Lil' Tay

From The Beat: We are so sorry that you lost your best friend and that he lost his life in a violent way at such a young age. Do you have someone that you can talk to about missing him? Sometimes people (especially young men) lock their feelings up inside when someone dies unexpectedly. We hope that you will experience grief, painful as it is, and to continue to talk to him and remember him for your whole life.

California Snow

My favorite holiday memory is when I was in Clearlake, California on December 31st, on Christmas day around 6:30.

It was snowing, and I woke up with a lot of presents. As soon as the family got done opening presents, we went outside to throw snowballs. It was so cold that I had to wear two pairs of gloves.

Then my dad opened the doors to the back yard. His back yard was 36 acres, and the pond was frozen. We went ice-skating with our shoes but before everybody got out the thick ice made a loud crack noise, then my cousin ran back.

Then it broke and he fell in the cold water he started screaming like a girl, and then crying like a baby!

-Dauce

From The Beat: Christmas in the snow is one of the best things in the world - out here we miss that experience, thanks for sharing this terrific memory. We felt like we should put a tune to it and make it a Christmas carol!

RIP Tay Tay

I miss you so much. I don't know why you went out there and got yourself killed. You should've thought twice. I loved you so much, and I was getting out the next day.

I had to come to your house and your mother said you was dead. How do I feel I feel? Lost without my ride or die ninja.

You was the only ninja I really loved. I don't know why you took my first birth child with you and you knew you was beefing out there.

I really miss you so much. You was the only ninja I really love. You still in my heart. I cry myself to sleep. Rest In Peace.

You will not be forgotten.

-Pained

From The Beat: That must have been so awful, coming home and hearing the news. It's heartbreaking to think that you lost your love, and even more heartbreaking to think of the hundreds, thousands of young people grieving for life lost so soon. Too soon. You write that you feel lost, and that is natural to feel that way under the weight of a terrible even like this, but have you since found a way to make peace with that loss in any way? We hope so.

RIP To My Loved Ones

Baby Byron- baby you gone, I been missing you for so long

G.O- You was a beast, had ninjas sniffing at your feet

Tario- Bra I really didn't get to know you, I'm sorry

Mario- Bra what's good, we stay going dumb for you in da hood

Melia-You was just a kid, sad to say, the heaves came it was your day

Arthur-You was a true O.G. gettin' it nontop, not caring who you had to defeat

Jason- was out for a couple days, than got sprayed

Baby Taylia-you was my only daughter

And I miss yah, wishing I could see yah

But know I would be with you in a better place I love you

Raymond-you was a true G, had ninjas wishing they could be what they seen.

-Da Baddest

From The Beat: You have experienced more loss in your few years than many do over a whole lifetime, and it was painful to even type and print up this long list. We are full of admiration for the way you continue to hold your head up high, and to smile and write beautiful poems each week. Thank you for your inspiration.

My Kind Of Woman

My kind of woman is sexy and sassy
She's smart and she's classy
Freaky and bold
Behind closed doors

My kind of woman
Knows how to please me
My kind of woman
Is a natural born tease

Free as the wind
Not afraid to sin
But refuse to shame me
She gives a damn
And at the same time not
Because she's cool like that
Phat like that
And above all
She got it all

Beauty, Brains and
Monkey that's untamed
And at the same time tamable

She's capable
Of pulling out her rabbit
Just like that
Anytime at the drop of a dime

It's mine
Is an extension of me
She's everything I want her to be
And at the same time
She's not

My kind of woman
Is a whole lot of woman
And that's why I could never
Have just one
Keep just one
Or love just one

My kind of woman
Baby
Is you
And you
And you
And you too.

-Bra Bra

From The Beat: Your rhymes are tight/but your mind ain't right/a woman with the class and pride you desire/won't share her man like a girl-for-hire/if you want a woman to stand by you/you need to show that you are true!

Fear

My fear is to end up like some of my friends who was shot and killed. I could overcome that by keeping my self in a safe place and make sure I don't get into anything violent. I plan on being with the right people and not the people who do bad things like pick on people and jump on them.

-Davaughn

From The Beat: That's something you should be fearing if people around you are dying. But like you said, make sure you make wise decisions and don't fall into a crowd where they only resort to negative options. Hang out with people that won't get you in trouble. And on another tip, try to stay out of trouble for yourself.

Getting Money: Positive or Negative?

I wonder how I am going to get money. Am I going to get my money the positive way or the negative way. Which one should I choose? I know what to do but the negative way of getting money is just calling me.

That's the fastest way to get money. I mean hella 100's. That's so joyful while you're out there making your money.

You really ain't worried about getting money the positive way 'cause you're so wrapped up with making it that way.

So I could use a lot of courage to do what's right.

-Ericka

From The Beat: They wouldn't call it temptation if it weren't so tempting, right? Ericka you have the courage you need, and you have the strength - what you need is support - family, a follow-up program, positive friends, so that you the positive comes natural because positivity is what you surround yourself with. How will you do that?

Our Princess Brianna

One thing that I want to accomplish in my life is to give my daughter "Brianna" the best life she could have. Knowing that I want to give that to her I have already started by giving her a daddy that loves her and will do anything for her or her mother. He may not be her "father" but he is her Daddy.

I just wish that everyone could see the look on her face when he walked in the door. To me he is the king. I'm the queen (who runs everything) So Brianna is our princess. When I get out we are going to move it up to the next step to giving her everything she could need. Our next step is to get married and I'm going to make him get money. My favorite Holiday memory was last year watching my babies 1st Christmas. It was beautiful.

-The King's Wife

From The Beat: We've heard so much about your love for your daughter that by now we have begun to feel like we know her ourselves! We wish you, your king, and your princess a safe and love-filled 2008.

My Accomplishment

When I get out of here first thing I want to accomplish is getting my diploma and going to college so I can accomplish the ultimate goal and that's being an artist so I can help out my family give them what they once gave me. So I've really sat in here thinking about all the things I did and it just make me think about if I could slow down I could accomplish my goals.

I'm sure that if I get my diploma and go to college and study music. I could be what I plan to, I just got to slow down. Peace.

-Determined

From the beat: Start off with your basic goals and accomplish them. Stay focused because it's gonna be hard. You will have obstacles in your path but don't crumble under pressure cause that's when it counts the most. Good luck, we wish you the best.

RIP Shoes

When the people close to me die I keep them legally going by getting them tatted on me. And every time it's the birthday of a someone we know who died, me and some friends would celebrate it. After that I would get some shoes made and it would say RIP and the name.

-Davaughn

From The Beat: That's a very creative way to keep someone's memory alive. Get some shoes with their name on it. What else do you do? How do you celebrate their birthday?

Always Shining

I wake up in this juvenile everyday wonderin how this light get so bright and how this weather changes this world getting hectic, just like how feelings get smothered. Sometimes it's like a fat boy just fell down but with all his weight he just got back up right in front of me faster then you can believe. That day was raining all that day. And when I looked up after it happened the sun came out. It was shining so hard every time the water dropped it dries up.

My Jesus chain was so bright that day I thought I was a real angel but when I got to really think about it Jesus told me look up you see how bright you is. You is an angel. I always want to shine, I can't go to many places that's too hot I got to say forget the devil every time a tear drop. So I look down and it was a wing on my back. If these shine how fly is that? Rest in peace Lil' Ant.

Lil' Dirt

From The Beat: What a piece. You don't need a chain to be shining bright! That's materialistic things. Nobody can't deny who you are. You don't need to be flossing. If you want to be fly then you got to act like you fly. How many times do you see people pretending to be something that they're not? As long as you got a good heart and a bright attitude you'll always be shining!

Dealing With Death

When someone close to you passes I sure do share the memories that I lived on with that person. I would also undoubtedly get his name tatted on my body just for a sign of respect and loyalty. I would also always mourn that person if he or she was really close to me.

I'm gonna keep on living the life I live eventually, because that will be respectful in a way, I would feel that I'm living for a legacy and for what he believed in.

-Nestor

From The Beat: What kind of life are you living right now? And what do you believe in? What kind of legacy are you looking for? How do you plan on getting it?

An Education Is Very Important

The most important thing I want to accomplish is to make good grades so I can go to college. The reason why I want to make those good grades so I can have the right grades so I can play basketball.

-Davaughn

From The Beat: Education is important my friend, so you better make good grades. That's good that you're using sports to motivate you to do better.

Fear Of Time

One of my fears are getting a lot of time.

Fears don't make you a weak person.

If anything it makes a person stronger because they get strong and overcome their fears.

Fear stopped me from doing things negative in my life.

If I get a lot of time I'm going to just accept it and do what I got to do

and make it a learning experience.

I don't want to do years but if it happens I got to chalk it as a loss.

-Keith

From The Beat: There's nothing like the feeling of getting over your fears. It's a sense of accomplishment, courage, and strength. The fear factor is always in the back of our mind. And you're right, that might actually stop you from doing stupid shhh. But why push it? Sounds like your head is screwed on right. Accept whatever you got coming and don't chalk it up as a complete loss. Make it valuable experience and learn as much as you can, especially when you are playing with your life. Learn fast so it doesn't have to get to that point.

Confronting Your Fears

One way that I think you can overcome your fears is by going out and do what you are scared of like heights or roller coasters. If you are scared of an animal I don't think you can overcome that fear because if it is a wild animal it might bite you or something. But if it is something that you can go out and do it go ahead and do it. That is how I think you can get over some of your fears.

-Beau

From The Beat: That's some pretty good advice on overcoming your fears. What can you tell somebody who doesn't have the courage to conquer their fears? Some people are not as brave as you are, or as they may seem.

Fear Vs. Fear

What's good Beat? This is Spiderman and I'm gonna talk bout my fears. They say the only thing to fear is fear it self. I'm startin' to take that to heart. If you fear you, you ain't scared of nothing. Nothing is a factor. They say expect the unexpected but even better I say expect nothing. If you never expect anything your always prepared if something happens and every positive thing that doesn't happened doesn't let you down and if it goes through...that much more joy.

-Spiderman

From The Beat: You are making some kind of sense. But you're right fear vs. fear. But fear comes in many ways and many disguises. For instance you might say that you ain't scared of spiders, but then you see 50 spiders on your bed, and then that might scare you. It's all a matter of how you look at it.

My Life

For years Lord I've been stuck in a maze
And I'm going through something but I guess it's a phase

Tryin' to stay woke up in this game but I'm lost in a daze
The system tryin' to do me in it's time to change my ways

Dear Lord, my life ain't right

Everyday I toss and turn in my sleep at night

Thinking bout how I grew up an how I live

Tryin' to make it on the block but the game won't give
See I done, done a lot of dirt and now am start with a heart

Feel like am lost in time

Stuck on a thought of my mind

Sell with nickels and dimes

I am stuck on the block wit' the glock

Shhh got me feelin' like the hands on the clock

'Cause I'm stuck doin' time

I've been thinking a lot have with hella thoughts 'bout death

This world ain't trust worthy all my family done left

All my ninjas is gone dog

I am stuck on my own dog

Telling Emmitt to tell the Lord to call me

I ain't feelin down here bra, this ain't my place

Everyday I am asking God please save my space.

It's hard...

-Rayshawn

From the beat: Ain't nothing wrong with having thoughts about death/ But there is something wrong if it involves losing your own breath/ We know it's hard, losing the friends that we close to/ And sometimes we make mistakes, even though we ain't suppose to/ Are you saying you don't wanna live, that you'd rather die/ You'd rather go to heaven now, than live a complete life?? We know it's hard, but you got to try to get over your sorrow/ Even though it's rough right now, it'll get better tomorrow/.....with each day that passes it's another step closer to where you want to be.

Memories From The Outs

That's how it feels like when you free on the outs. I remember all them fun with my real homeboys, and based on the life that all we do on the outs. And every night I pray, hope one day I get out I will go back to what we do.

-Lil' T

From The Beat: Get back to what you do? Have you noticed that what you DO is the thing that got you locked up in the first place?

My Girl

The only reason I want to get out is because I want to be with my girl.

I really love her, 'cause she here for me. Not like some other people that tells you they care about you but when you in the hall nobody cares about you. So that's the only reason I want to get out.

-Rolando

From The Beat: Once you get out - what do you plan to do to stay out? We want you to have the chance to be with your girl too, but we don't want you to get caught up and ripped away from her again by a negative lifestyle?

RIP Arturo

Rest in peace to the homeboy Arturo.

You was always down for anything.

Never back down from nobody
never scared to ride for the hood.

You was from the same city, Hayward but from a
different turf,
you got my respect homeboy
RIP Arturo.

-Lil' Manny

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear that your boy died. How did he die? How does his death affect your life? Do you look at life differently?

Losing Someone

On the day of 6-8-04, I lost one of my older brothers to somebody who I hate and despise 'till this day and probably always will.

So in a sense I'm highly upset, but then I'm not only 'cause I feel that he lives on through me -- by me getting serious about sports, going to school. I'm going to stop doing almost all of the stupid stuff I did when he was here that he told me to stop, but I just never listened to him.

So on his birthday, which is 1-31-87 which is coming up in two mo' months, I'm gonna sit at the cemetery all day and tell him what's going on in life.

I'll tell him how the fam is doing, and just how much I miss him. I wish we was able to be together or I could be with 'em so in remembrance of him I get hoodies, t-shirts, take pictures, block parties, and all type of shhh.

But I let it be known who the hell I be. And everybody know it. I'm gone keep 'em alive through me till I'm buried deep under. Not to say where I'm from but RIP Christian, Drew, Frizzle Foster, Jerry Duckworth, Zillion, Cash, Charles, Double Ford and the rest of the fallen homies.

Gone but never forgotten. He died over a girl he never liked and it was two days before my 14th birthday. So I miss all ya'll RIP and save a spot for me.

-Lil' Solid

From The Beat: We hope he saves that spot for you, but also that it takes you a long long time to get there, because you've got real dreams to pursue, real hopes, and real plans. You talk about representing where you are from, and for us there is no better way to do that than becoming successful in life, so that you can truly represent the best of the people you've loved and mourned.

Graduation

What I want to accomplish in my life is to graduate high school. I did not do well in my freshman and sophomore years. So I had flunked once. I am now a sophomore at Skyline High School. I hope to do better in school and also learn new things. I hope I make it through my sophomore yr so then I can become a Jr. and research what I wanna accomplish.

What I need to avoid is bad people. I have a fear that when I meet the wrong people, I might let down my parents. My greatest fear is that if I hang out with the wrong people I might do things that I normally do not do. I might do something that is bad and I would have to face the consequences later on. I know that if I do something bad and my parents found out they would be mad at me, I don't like letting my parents down because it makes me feel bad too. That is my greatest fear.

-Thouh

Form The Beat: One thing you have to keep in mind is not only are you letting your parents down you're letting yourself down. Don't worry too much about trying to impress your parents. Be yourself and think about your life. Your parents want what's best for you. And being in jail is not the best for you. Think about the decisions you make and how they will affect your life. Cause in the end you are the one that suffers. It's your life not your parents'. You live it nobody lives it for you.

meone Close To Me Passed

When I was a young teen I had lost my grandma. When she had passed away my lifestyle had changed. I started doing bad things like smoking weed, robbing somebody and stealing and lying.

For the last four years my life has got worse and worse. I tried to forget about it but it just would come back to me.

When I came to the hall I started praying to the Lord and ask him for forgiveness for my sin and I went to church on Sunday and I got save and now I'm a changed man ready for a new life.

-Laron

From the Beat: Sounds like you made some crucial mistakes. Sometimes when our loved ones pass away it might make us act a little crazy. And then we don't know how to deal with our emotions. But we're glad to hear that you are a changed man. Remember those mistakes you made are in the past. The decisions you make now will be the outcome of your future. Stay close to your God, now that you feel saved.

Me

I am the boy from Berkeley. I'm the boy wit' doe that everybody want.

I was raised right and taught if you mind your own you live long. That was the rule in my family and my surroundings I was raised around.

What I see in my life is what I want in my own hands.

-B

From The Beat: It's not just the money, though, right? Isn't it also about how you earn that money, how you treat others around you, how clean you are in your conscience? Isn't that part of what it means to be "rich"? You tell us.

Fallen Homie

What's up wit' you? This Box from them streets of Hayward. The topic I am going to write about is the lost homie and the homie that I lost was like my brother. And just writing about it makes the feelings that I felt the day I found out he died. So I just going to say I miss you and can't wait to meet up again, so rest in peace Arturo. Late

-Box

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about your friend passing away? How are you dealing with it? How can you keep his memory alive? Why did your friend pass away? Is it because of the lifestyle he lead?

One Way To Get Out

'Sup Beat? Damn! I played the shhh out of my self! I escaped out of this pathetic supposedly "secure" juvenile hall and just made my sentencing a lot worse! I made this facility look like "fools" and now they want to really give it to me...

But there's no one to blame but myself... Now it's time to accept my consequences and ride my time out. It was fun while it lasted. I'll be out soon though. They can't keep me locked up forever... well at least not mentally.

-Angel

From The Beat: You'll probably become one of the those juvenile hall legends for your little escape. Our view is that if you're willing to accept the consequences for your act (and by saying it was fun while it lasted, you're basically saying it was worth it), then go for it. The problem is too many people "go for it" before they even consider the consequences...

Some Shhh I Wish I Never Did

What's good Beat? It's Meezy the great an' I'm chillin' in unit 7 waitin' for ma 707 trial to be done. But some shhh I wish I never did was get in a fight in unit 2 'cause they chargin' me wit' that shhh. They gave me six new charges for what I did. If I wouldn't have put ma hands on that ninja, I would have got out by now 'cause they been dropped ma weak-ass case. If I would have never put my hands on that ninja, I would have never spent ma 18th birthday in this thang. That's it. That's all I got for The Beat, man.

-Meezy The Great

From The Beat: So, Meezy, if you're so great, why did you let this other ninja provoke you into putting your hands on him? It sounds like you're facing some pretty serious consequences for what you did. Was it worth it? Could you have found another way to deal with the situation that wouldn't have put you in this situation?

I'm Determined

Wassup with The Beat? It's ya boy Marv coming live from that maximum unit 7. Alright, one thing I want to accomplish in life is successful. I want to be able to have a good paying job to support my future family. Yup, and I'm going to do it, so look out for my name, 'cause I'm determined to do so and aint nothin' or nobody gonna stop me.

-Marvin

From The Beat: We admire your determination, but we wish you had filled in a few details. For example, what kind of job do you hope to get, and what are you doing to prepare yourself for it? If we look out for your name, where should we be looking?

When Will I Stop Doing Dumb Stuff?

When my grandfather died, I was crying for a week because my grandfather was my friend. I took it hard when I seen him inside his casket. I felt like making by just going up there and just holding and never let go. But I move on. But if my grandmother was to die, I would be so mad at myself because I put her through a lot of stress by always being bad in school, doing dumb stuff and running off, staying out late.

Now I am up in the hall. When am I going to stop doing dumb stuff? I am going to change my life and get good grades in school and graduate on time and go to college and maybe graduate from there.

-Maria

From The Beat: If you don't know the answer to the question, who does? You will stop doing dumb stuff when you make the decision that doing dumb stuff only leads to dumb consequences. You have it in your power to achieve every single one of the goals you've laid out here. We hope you use your power wisely.

I Want To Change

One thing I would like to accomplish is that I wanna change in life. I don't wanna be the same. I wanna stop going to jail and mess up in the streets doing bad things. I'm not gonna do drugs.

-Michael

From The Beat: Wanting to change is the beginning of change... but only the beginning. You must be willing to sacrifice some of the things you like doing for a better future. We hope you seek help in giving up drugs and other bad habits, because all of us can use all the help we can get.

Three Topics In One

I try my beat do overcome fears like dying, but it's very hard to do 'cause you don't know what's next after this life.

When my cousin passed away I was feeling very sad. Then I was mad. But what I did was go get my cousin name on my arm so I can always remember him forever.

What I would like to accomplish in my life is have a family, a god job and a wife, and take my family out the 'hood, build my mom a house. I'm go work construction so I can build her a big house. That's what I want to accomplish in my life.

-Acie

From The Beat: We combined your three pieces into one, Acie, because when you write on three topics you can hardly say anything of value at all. We want more than two or three sentences on a subject. So please, next time pick just one topic and write as much as you can about it.

I'ma Do It Big

Was up with The Beat? This Grimy. First, I would like to say rest in peace to my homie Mono and Chino and Fino. Y'all die doing some hard crimes, but I know you are in heaven chopping it up with the Lord. But yeah, rest in peace homie. I love y'all.

But anyway, I'm locked up at this bs YGC. This playa sucka can't wait till they let me out. I'ma do it big. But yeah, I need a cigarette with a 40 ounce.

-Grimy

From The Beat: What we can't understand is how some of you write that the only thing you fear is God, but others (like you) write that even those doing "hard crimes" go to heaven. So, what is there to fear from God if it doesn't matter whether you follow Him or not? If everybody ends up "chopping it up with the Lord," then there's really nothing to fear from God. So, what do you think they mean when they say they fear God?

Never Forgotten Memories

When someone close to me passes, I share the memories I had with that person with others. We talk about how we had each other's back in dire situations. Or when we had fun kickin' it at parties or chillin' at da block, drankin' and smokin' with that fallen homie.

Also we reminisce about when we all first met, like when we were little kids just having fun not even banging or set trippin', just pure fun like when you're a kid chillin' at da park, water fights in the summer time, snow trips, etc...

These are some things I bring up around my homies when a homie passes. Well Beat, thanks for your understanding.

-Lil' Rob

From The Beat: We think these are all good strategies for dealing with the pain of loss and the memory of a friend or loved one. When you look back at those carefree times of your childhood, can you see places along the way where you wish you had taken different turns, made different choices, so you wouldn't be where you are now? Well, you can't change the choices of the past, but you can make different choices in the future.

On Becoming A Youth Writer

Today, November 27th. My day was okay, but after lunch, I got a message sent from a friend, and that made my day go good and also put a smile on my face.

Later in the day, the cast of "The Color Purple" came and ran they mouths. During all this talking, I told them that I like to write, but doubted that if I'll ever become an author. One of the specific cast members felt I could possibly become a youth author, so she claimed she will write me, but 'bout time she do, I'll be in a grouper and I told her that. So she said she will go and talk to my PO and see when I'll be out the grouper so she can eventually introduce me to Alice Walker so we can write a book together.

Then my day became irritated again, because females didn't know how to act around Michelle Williams from Destiny's Child.

-Sabrina

From The Beat: What do you mean the cast was runnin' their mouths? Weren't you interested in what they had to say? Most people would be thrilled to meet cast members from a Broadway show, and we're envious. Whether you ever get to write a book with Alice Walker or not, there is absolutely nothing to prevent you from writing your own book. Do it!

Change For My Kids

When someone passes on in my life, I first get a T-shirt made. Then I get the person tatt'd on me. I make sure that his kids are living good. The person who passed if it's family lived their life. Some one outside change my life to be better for my kids.

-Da Ron

From The Beat: We understood everything until we came to the last line. Are you waiting for someone on the outside to change your life, or have you already found that someone? Real change can only come when you want to make it.

Life Itself

When I wake up in the mornin'
I got a lot of thoughts on my mind
When I open the shades
The sun start to hurt my eyes
As my thoughts get deep
I let out a big sigh
People betrayed me, crossed me
But I still hold my head high
I don't mess with hatas
'Cause I don't need stress in my life
I don't mess with snitches
'Cause they bound to die
But when it comes down to it
That's just a part of life

-Rainbow Gurl

From The Beat: How deep do your thoughts go? Deep enough to examine the life you've been living and seeing where you have to make changes? We hope so, 'cause the only way to avoid the stress of the hall is to stay out of it!

Thoughts

When someone close to me dies, I keep them close in my thoughts. Although it's hard, still, every chance I get, I try to talk to them. And, although they're gone, I still celebrate their memories and I also celebrate their birthdays an' all.

-Queela

From The Beat: We admire the positive and healthy way you remember those who have passed.

Fear Of Heights And Spiders

If I wanted to overcome any fears, I would start workin' on them and see what I can do to help me overcome them. I fear high places and I have a bad-ass fear of spiders. I think that those are same of my deepest fears.

-Clavo

From The Beat: Since you say you would start working on your fears to overcome them, what kind of work are you doing to overcome your fear of high places and spiders?

When Someone Close Passes

When someone close passes away, I be always tagging their names on papers, and on walls. I also get a T-shirt wit' their pictures on my shirt. When somebody I know passes away, I keep one of their belonging at my house, so I could remember all the good times we had. I mean I always remember dem, 'cause they stay in my mind forever, but their belongings just make me remember what we did.

When I drank, I always pour some drank for the homies who passed away. It's like saying, "Here, take dis drank," like we did when he was alive.

-Alfy

From The Beat: How many times have you had to do these rituals for someone close to you? How does the death of friends at such a young age affect and change you? Has it made you examine your life more closely, or in any different ways?

My Uncle

When someone close to me passed it was my uncle Bin. Me and my uncle was close. He was my friend and he was one of the big homies on the block. He was one of the coolest big homies on the block. But when he passed, that was not cool. Everybody was heated, especially me.

I didn't go to the funeral because I couldn't look at him like that. It was bad enough that he's died, but they want me to go look at him like that in a casket, so I didn't go. When I went to the block, everybody ask me why I didn't go and I told them why. They felt where I came from, so I ask who all came they said everybody from the block.

I went to get a shirt and a hoodie made with the picture on the front and the back of the hoodie, and when I get out, I'ma try to get some gold teeth with his name, and it Uncle Bin!

-Jabari

From The Beat: We're sorry you lost your uncle this way, Jabari. Those left behind are always the ones who have to bear the pain. But we're curious about something. Since you and your uncle knew the likely consequences of the game — you're paying one of those consequences now, and he paid another with the ultimate price — who, exactly, are you heated at?

Four Topics In One

I really don't do much, because I don't like to dwell upon pain. It's painful to think about dead people that I love, that I could no longer be with.

I never really had to overcome a fear. If it's a point in my life, I don't think my fears interfere with my life.

I want to finish school.

I miss about five years ago, when I was so happy, 'cause my mom finally got everything I wanted.

-Johnisha

From The Beat: Okay, Johnisha, we ran all four of your pieces into one because the longest piece you gave us was just two sentences — and believe us, you can't say anything in two sentences. Please don't write on more than one topic. Choose the one that interests you the most, and write a lot about just that one thing. Thank you.

A Lot On My Mind

I miss my grandpa. He died when I was like 11. I wish he would come back. I never had a chance to chill wit' papa I really haven't made a shirt are tattoo but I'm going to be getting one though.

I really don't got nothing to say though 'cause I got a lot on my mind 'cause I'm suppose to be getting out.

-Money Earnin Vernon

From The Beat: We feel cheated, MEV, because you tell us that you have a lot on your mind but you don't share any of it with us! So, can we ask you a question about what you did share? Here's the question: If your grandpa came back and sat on your bed in your room at the hall and told you he wanted you to change your life so that you finish school, give up the game, and move ahead in life, would you respect him enough to do it?

I Love My Birthday

My favorite holiday is my birthday because I got all control of it and I'm the only one getting stuff. I wear what I want; I do what I want; and I do the people I want. What I mean by controlling it is that I pick where I'm going, what I'm wearing, what I'm gone do. This year my birthday gone be poppin', on the 19th of January, ya dig? I might see ya. Holla at ya girl!

-Badness

From The Beat: Well, happy birthday (almost). We hope that you're free on your birthday, and that you celebrate with enough responsibility to stay free.

I Ain't Your Pet

Why you try to act like I'm your pet an' shhh? I understand you staff and got the right to tell me what to do, but that don't give you a right to try to treat me like your puppet. Why try to do too much? Just 'cause I'm in here, you try to have control over me. Just 'cause I'm hella cool and don't show my negative actions, that's why you try to do too much.

I'm hella patient. That's why you try to take advantage. Just 'cause I'm in here and I'm eighteen, I'm still the same. Why you try to act hella hard? Just 'cause you work here? That don't impress me. It just makes me hella mad and Monstrita is in my head, so please don't even look at me! If you can see, I try to avoid you and not even look at you.

I'm smart, though. I don't let you get to me. I handle my business. Monstrita is ready to come out. So please put me in my room, 'cause I'm ready to take flight. So, God, please give me your light. Sincerely,

-Monstrita

From The Beat: We almost didn't publish this, Monstrita, because you're writing around the edge of what is not appropriate. Still, you were respectful, so we went ahead. All we can tell you is that you will always find people in life who use their authority in ways that offend you, whether it's there in the hall, out in school, or working a legit job. Sometimes, the best course of action is just to grit your teeth and suck it up until you're out of the situation.

I Want To Be A Pediatrician

When I get out here, I'm going to go back to school and try to get my grades up. Then I'm going to try my best to get off probation and I'ma work hard when I go back to school. And when I get older, I want to be a pediatrician.

-Shakia

From The Beat: What a great ambition! But, of course, it takes work to go through all the schooling you need to become a pediatrician, so our advice is to take it a day at a time. Take high school seriously, and that will lead to college. Take college seriously, and that will lead anywhere you want it to.

Drink And Smoke Every Day

We all have fears in life. My worst fear is to die, but ain't nothing we can do about it. So all I gotta do is live life to the fullest, get drunk and smoke weed every day.

-Lomy

From The Beat: We're curious to know how staying drunk and high every day is living life to the fullest. It sounds like a way to avoid living life to us. By the way, if we all have fears (and we agree with you), what do you make of those Beat writers who claim to be afraid of nothing?

My Fears

I really fear a couple of things in life, but I'm gon' only tell you one thing, though, and that would be me fearing my grandmother dying. She got a liver transplant this year and she be sleeping a lot, and she be sick all the time. I worry a lot about her, so I want y'all to pray for her for me.

-H Gurl

From The Beat: We hope your grandmother gets well. We understand why you are worried about her, and when she passes, it will be painful. So, we hope you're doing everything in your power now to make her feel proud of you.

Almost Fearless

Back in the days when I was nine years old, I used to fear guns and dying. But when I was 11 years old, I overcame my fears by knowing that people is going to die no matter what.

And guns... Yeah, I became good at guns. Now I don't fear nothing but god. Like hey say, you live by the gun you die by the gun and I live that to the fullest.

-V-Guttah

From The Beat: If you live by the gun, then we have to tell that your fear of god is nothing more than words. If you truly feared God, then violating all his laws would leave you trembling to consider how He will judge you. What do you mean you fear God? What is it, exactly that you fear?

Stay True

Wha's poppin' wit' da Beat? Dis young Barlow. I been in here for a week, an' I'm already goin' crazy. But I think das jus dem hatters for you. My PO hatin'. Da staff be catin'. I need ta get up out of here. I should be out soon, dough. I gotta jus stay true ta myself and keep it real, dis juvie BS ain't shhh.

-Young B

From The Beat: What does it mean to "stay true to yourself?" Does that mean we can expect to see you coming back over and over to this place? This little time may seem like nothing to you, but it's making you comfortable giving your life to the system, and it gets harder and harder. We hope you don't have to learn that through bitter personal experience.

He Was Like A Brother

The story I'm talking about today is about my dead homie Mono. He was like a brother to me. He showed me how to survive on the streets. I did dirt with him, smoked weed with him, did a lot of things with him. The day he died I was in B2 in the old halls. That shhh killed me inside. Four days later, I got sent to B5 max.

I miss him. I have pictures and shirts of him. RIP Mono.

-Vago

From The Beat: We're sorry you lost someone who was so special in your life. And we're sorry that so many have lost so many — and had to deal with the same emotions and pain that you have had to deal with. When and how will it end?

Waiting At The Starting Gate

Well, what up wit' Da Beat Within? I'm still here. I thought I was gon' get out two weeks ago, but they have to do hella paper work for me to go to Glen Mills. I have court on Thursday. Hopefully, that day they are goin' to tell me when to go. I can't wait. I can't wait 'til I receive my diploma and feel a great bliss overcome me. I just want to get this started, so wish me luck.

-Lil' Roach

From The Beat: It sounds like you're at the gate ready to start a new race. We're not sure about being overcome with bliss for getting your diploma, but it sure will be an achievement worth celebrating.

Holiday After Holiday In The Hall

Well, I could describe a messed up holiday memory. Spent my eighteenth birthday in here. Spent Halloween, Thanksgiving. I'ma spend Christmas, New Year's Eve. Damn, all these holidays I could have been spending them with my son, my family. Is good, though. It ain't the end of the world.

-Monstrita

From The Beat: You're right, it's not the end of the world. Not spending these holidays at home with loved ones is worth regretting, but it's worth far more to focus on a future in freedom where you will create wonderful family memories of celebrating these holidays together.

To Become A Rapper

One thing I would like to accomplish is to becoming a rapper — getting my voice across the world, getting my city on the map, showing others what they can become from nothing cause I coming from a long way. But it ain't over till I'm gone.

-Young Tae

From The Beat: We'd like to read a sample of your raps. What do you usually rap about? (We chose not to publish your Christmas memory piece because we want you to write on just one topic per week, not on four topics! When you write on all the topics, the most you can give us is a couple of sentences each. That is not enough to say much of value. So, next time, choose one topic and write as much as you can about it.)

Pictures For My Birthday

My favorite holiday is my birthday. Every year on my birthday, I always get what I want. I get, like, seven pairs of shoes, and also get money. And I always take a picture every year.

Last year I took a picture with my boyfriend and this year I got everything planned out. First, I'm going to take pictures, then that day I'm going to get together with my family and have a big dinner together.

-Donecia

From The Beat: Great! When is your birthday? Make sure you don't do anything that gives the system power to take you from your family so that you spend your birthday behind walls.

Fear

When I was younger, a dog bit me, so from then on, I've been scared of dogs. I try not to express my feeling 'bout being scared, but once they get close, everything changes, as in all ma actions.

And also, I'm scared of butterflies. Even though they say it's a start of a new beginning, I guess I'm just not ready for that new beginning, and I'm also scared of all type of insects.

-Queela

From The Beat: We're not sure how to deal with your fear of butterflies, because it's hard for us to imagine being afraid of something so beautiful and non-threatening. But we hope you can deal with your fear of dogs directly, because they can be wonderful companions, and there's no reason to go through life fearing such a common pet.

Rituals Of Death

What up wit' The Beat? It's Young Money. When someone close to me passes away, I like to go out and find out how they died or how that person either killed them or had something to do with their death of that person. Or, I will go get a T-shirt made or tattoo. Or I might get a chain made that says RIP. These are some of the things that I do when someone dies.

-Young Money

From The Beat: How many times have you had to do these things? What are you doing to honor your own life by staying safe and free?

My Grandmother's Legacy

When my grandmother passed away, it hurt me very deeply because she raised me. She also showed me all positive images. I feel bad because she raised me to make wise choices than this. This is my decision. It was not a good one.

My mom she also raised me, fed me clothed me, and everything in life. When my grandmother passed away, I custom made a RIP T-shirt. It was one of the hardest shirts made. I got her name tatted on me, because I will always remind myself and others what she meant to me in life. Her legacy lives on with me. I'm out, peace.

-Robert

From The Beat: We can tell that she was a wonderful person to have in your life. In addition to honoring her by tatting her name, how else do you respect her memory? If she could sit with you now, what would she be counseling you to change? Would you listen?

Live For The Future

When my uncle and my cousin passed away, I was in a group home, mad because I couldn't go to either of their funerals. But I started really thinking 'bout it — life goes on. You can't just live in the past. I'ma miss 'em, but if I keep thinking, sooner or later something gonna be done about it, so I try to overlook it and let that change my actions and thoughts get back on track.

But in my dreams, it's a list of things I would be doing if I wasn't in a group home when that happened, so my answer is, "Don't let nobody take your smile away from you and turn it into a killing spree."

Only those who been through it know what I'm talking 'bout, and if not, don't read it."

-Weez

From The Beat: If you are counseling not to ruin your own or other's lives by seeking revenge, then we agree with you 100%, and think it shows maturity on your part. If being inside a group home kept you from acting out on your desire to "do" something, then we're glad you were given that time to think about your own future.

One Thing I Want To Accomplish

I want to do a lot of stuff that a lot of people don't get to do.

Like for instance, get money and be a duffle bag boy, not let people boss me around like I was a boy toy. But if anyone tries to cross me, I will destroy any boy or man.

Be on top of the world sipping gin.

The life I live is: "Forget where I been, its where I'm about to go."

Stack dough, live the life of glamour and joy.

Now you know the definition of a duffle bag boy.

-Tariq

From The Beat: You can threaten violence if you want/You can sip your gin until you're gaunt/But how can you make this fantasy not fail/If your actions lead you to jail?/Take a look at where they've got you/Then make a real plan for how to make your dreams come true!

My Biggest Fear

What's good wit' tha Beat? Dis dat ninja Na-Na F Holly about to talk about my biggest fear. My biggest fear is me getting killed in da streets. I have dreams of death but that's because of tha life I chose — to sell drugs, tote pistols and shhh like dat.

Now I'm in a bad situation doing time or dying in the streets. I've done a lot of dirt in my life an' now is tha time. I think I am going to pay for my bad choices. That is my biggest fear. But I'm gone see you next time. To all, stay up.

-Na-Na

From The Beat: We think your fear is very rational, very understandable. But what is less rational (to us) is why you would choose to live in a manner that puts your very life at risk! You know, this is the only one we've got.

No Kids Allowed

All you suckas and chumps that think I done forgot, I didn't. If you think I'm gonna forgive you, I ain't. And for all of y'all who wanna act like I just disappeared or I wasn't never comin' back, ha ha, 'cause at the end of the day only the real ones will still be there. And you could bet your life, if you take a peek around the corner, and fo' sure I'll be on two feet. A lot of us are doin' some time, but the time is what separates the men from the children. The ones who are committed will be back; the others will disappear. But I'm gonna be back in a lil' bit.

-Birdman

From The Beat: It sounds like nothing has challenged your life on the outs (or inside) sufficiently to get you to consider any other life. What talents and skills do you have to work your way into the outside world? Does the world beyond your block offer you anything valuable enough for you to invest your mind, experience, imagination in it? Otherwise, your taste of freedom will be bittersweet.

Letting My Parents Down

If I could only accomplish one thing and one thing only, it would be fixing the relationship between me and my parents. I really messed up and my parents. I really screwed up when I met new friends in middle school. I started not going to school, staying out late at night, getting in trouble with the law, etc. Now that I'm locked up at YGC and about to get sent away, I finally realize how much my parents love me. Therefore, if I get out of here, I would cherish everything I have.

-Wu

From The Beat: When you think about all that your parents have done for you over the years, then you know how selfless they have been, sacrificing for you. That's what parents do for children. But you are no longer a child, so it's time to think about sacrificing something for them. So, when you get out of here (and you will), what changes do you see in your life?

When It's Time It's Time

Time comes when you die. Gotta think twice befo' you don't make it. Ninjas killin' babies throwin' up da wrong thang, tryin' ta get millions wit' chump change. When you die, don't try ta come back. Dat ain't how God want dat.

Check yo' act. Try ta get upstairs. You might come back. If not, you must be in hell. Talking ta God could make ya life longer. Disrespectin' death... he around da corner. Think. Don't act. You gone get laid on yo' back. Dumb ninjas stay strapped. Most dumb ninjas be da main ninjas getting's smacked.

-Quan

From The Beat: If you're saying that tying yourself to God is a lot safer than tying yourself to hell, we agree! What are you doing (and not doing) that will move you closer to God?

What I Want To Accomplish

One thing I want to accomplish in my life is accepting god as my savior and leave all the lifestyle I'm living now. get my life on track and graduate high school and college as well as make it to play professional basketball or professional football.

-Twan

From The Beat: What is keeping you from accomplishing this goal?

RIP Tydis B

What's good with tha Beat? Dis dat ninja Na-Na F Holly about ma bra Slim Jim Rick. Man, ma ninja got hit August, 2007. Ah miss ma ninja so much. Man, he was one of ma closest homies. Man, we used to do everything together — smoke, drank, an hella other shhh. Man, that was tha closest ninja to me.

This kind of shhh happen all tha time, tha closest people to me always getting popped. But it's good though brah. Now we gone ride off top until we drop. But RIP Slim Jim Rick. We love you brah. You gone but never forgotten.

Well Beat, words are getting short. I'm out.

-Na-Na

From The Beat: You tell us that the closest people to you are "always getting popped." You tell us that your closest homie paid with his life. You tell us that your biggest fear is getting killed in the streets. After all that, you tell us that you're "gone ride til you drop." Can you explain this to us? It seems like you've committed yourself to a life that guarantees those you know will get popped or caged. How many chances do you think you have?

One Thing To Accomplish

One thing that I would like to accomplish is finish high school, play football for my high school, then go to college down South or something, and play college football, and then get drafted to the NFL and try to be famous.

-Lil' Bra

From The Beat: In order to play in high school or college, you have to keep up good grades? How are yours? Were you going to school regularly on the outs?

It Really Hurt

To my dead cousin and to the rest of the dead homies...

When my cousin got shot a few times and he went to the hospital and we found out he was dead, everybody from my set and neighborhood was mad and sad, especially his mother. She cry every day, but she stopped. Everybody was ready to react and they were very upset.

Man, I was very close to him and it really hurt me, 'cause I seen him not that long ago. But at the funeral, man, it was so much people, so much people crying, and sad. Man, I felt like hurting someone really bad. The people that did it got it, but not like he did.

But RIP, cousin Ra Ra, see you in heaven. But everybody on the block was sad, 'cause Ra Ra was the homie, but it really hurt a lot of people. He told me to stay out of trouble and stuff, and I couldn't believe when I found out he was dead. It really hurt me.

Catch you later, Beat, and I really wanna put something together with The Beat and put it in the book, fo' real. Halla.

-Deontae

From The Beat: We know that terrible pain of loss, and we feel yours. But at the same time, the desire to hurt somebody for the hurt they did seems to us only to cause more hurt and nothing else. The dead feel no pain. Only the living suffer. We're sorry you're suffering, and hope that you don't do something that makes others suffer.

Move On

When someone close passes away from me, sometimes I want to lose it. But I pull my self together and say to myself, "They're gone but never forgotten. They will always stay close to my heart." It's best to move on than regret about what happened to so and so.

-Young Tae

From The Beat: These words are easier said than done. Moving on can take a long time, especially if that person was a close loved one.

Sick And Tired

One thing I want to accomplish is to stay out of the system. I keep on coming back into the system every time I'm almost done with it. I'm in the system for about three years already, and I'm tired of it. But for some reason, I can't stay out of it, even when I'm trying to do good. But this time I'm going to try even harder than I ever did, because I'm sick and tired of this, and I actually want to make a change and be successful in life.

-Unsigned

From The Beat: When you write, "for some reason," you can't stay out of the system, what are some of the reasons, when you think about it? We hope you truly are sick and tired of handing over control of your life to strangers who can't care about you as much as you care about yourself. Do you have a plan for when you get out? You need one.

I Fear Being Taken From My Family

The fear that I have to say that bothers me the most is getting shot dead and took out the world from my family I love so much. I deal with that fear by trying not to be in the same place for too long, and I try not to let people see my face much.

-Twan

From The Beat: Have you considered some more basic steps to avoid being in the situation that could take you out? For example, not living the lifestyle that allowed the system to take you from the family you love so much?

Back On The Streets

One thing I want to accomplish is getting off probation 'cause being on probation keep getting me sent to group homes. But yeah, I'ma knock this lil' six months out and be back on the streets, feel me. But I'm out this joint.

-Cal

From The Beat: Of course you'll be back out on the streets. But the question is, what then? If you keep doing the things that brought you here, then you can expect to be brought again. It's as simple as that.

I Fear God

My fears is god. When I know I'm doing something wrong I know one day He's gonna make me reap what I sow.

-Young Tae

From The Beat: How will God make you reap what you sow? And if that is true, do you fear Him enough to change what you're doing on the outs?

Always Close

Someone close to me when they passed away is my grandpa. When he died, I was six or seven. When I was a little kid, I got hurt. Then he help me to get better, and that why he is so close to me now.

-Lil' C

From The Beat: If your grandpa could come and sit with you for an hour, what do you think he would be telling you?

When Someone Close Passes...

When someone close to me passes, of course I make a white T for that person and rock the ninja or female to the fullest. I continue to do good in life or try to do good on the outs to live on the life where they left off.

-Twan

From The Beat: We're not sure what you mean by living the life where they left off. When a young person dies on the street, it's often because the life he was living was not a good way, so how do you "try to do good" in a way that keeps you safe and free?

I Don't Want My Son To Look At Me With Water Eyes

I hope to accomplish getting my GED and finding a good, well-paid job to help my moms with the bills and support my son and raise him right, so one day I don't have to come to jail and see my son lock up in the way of the water eyes my mother seen me and my big bra.

-Young Drew

From The Beat: We don't know exactly what you mean by "the water eyes" your mother saw. Do you mean tears? Whose tears? We hope you give your son the father that every child deserves.

When Someone Close To You Passes

When one of my homies passes, I carry on their legacy by retaliating. When my homies die, I wear they picture around my neck. I'm about to get my homie, Ant (RIP) tatted on my arm.

I continue to live the same lifestyle the homies was living. I'm gonna stay strong for my ninjas 'til the day I pass over. I make sure the homies live on through me by letting others feel the pain they cause in the homie's family. I'm gonna make sure my homie's never get forgotten. Even though they gone, they name's still go' be singing in the streets.

Rest in peace to all the homies who passed over. To all in the, keep y'all heads up. I love y'all.

-Mike

From The Beat: We understand your sadness and outrage that your homies were killed in the streets, but doesn't any action you take to retaliate just keep the mess, the pain, the violence going, and make it worse? Why isn't the most important lesson their deaths have to teach you—that life on earth is precious, and nothing should cut it down?

Take The Government's Money

I would like to go to college for a couple of years so I can work here in juvenile hall. The reason why is because I feel like the system has taken years of my life away, and the only way I can take something from them is by getting the governments money.

-Lil' Spitta

From The Beat: We've read a lot of reasons in The Beat for wanting to work in the juvenile justice system, but this is the first one we can recall that is based on taking money back for the time lost. Of course, the government is a very big institution. You could be getting paid as a teacher, and that would be taking money from the government, too...

Time Here Goin' By Fast

What's up wit' The Beat? This is Enano chilling at the Ranch. I been here, doing time for five months. I got six plus months to go. Time here been going by fast. Pretty soon I'm 'bout to be back to the spot.

-Enano

From The Beat: If, when you're free again, you go right back to the spot, what do you expect to be any different? Sounds to us like you will be the same Why won't it just be a matter of time before you're back inside? What has being in juvy and the Ranch taught you about your life on the outs? If it's nothing, you might as well just stay down there.

This Is Crazy

What's up Beaters? It's Destiny once again from Gilroy. Well, today's topic is just about crazy stuff. Freak in ey, well I've been here since Oct. 16, '07. Shhh, well I still gotta be here 'til Dec. 27, '07.

Well today we were on lockdown for three hours. That was boring. Well shhh I talked to my man Cholo last night. He said his phone bill was hella high so I told him I'll just write him letters and he was mad, but it's his pad number and his mom got mad at him, LOL! Sucka! Just kidding, he knows I love him!

Well, I've been getting roommates like crazy. And today for like three hours or so I was up singing oldies thinking about my Baby Lol! Shhh I don't know though so yeah there's not that much drama no more, thank God. I freaking hate drama cause it's all bullshh talk! Damn, I'm trying to get out earlier then my release date but my PO's hating. I'm just trying to get out before Dec. 24 for my little brother's ninth B-day!

-Destiny

From The Beat: It's good to be drama free! Why do you think there is so much drama? How can you avoid drama on the streets so you won't have to get into any trouble?

The Things We Do When A Homie Dies

I will find a spot on a wall of a building or a store and see if they let me draw a picture of him so people could remember him. Yeah, I will get a T-shirt made and put RIP homeboy with his picture. I would tell everybody how we got drunk, party with girls and shhh,

No, I would still be me doing what I do.

-Monkey

From The Beat: We had to break your piece into two because you wrote about two different subjects without separating them. Next time, choose just one topic to write about, and give us as much as you've got on that one.

When He Passed

When someone close to you passes it hurts very much. One minute they are there - the next minute they are gone. I wish that wouldn't happen but that's the way life goes. My best homie Criminal was killed by a car crash. It all started like this. We were out tweaking so we went to get a g-ride. We had it for about 2-3 days. The last day we had it we went to kick it w/ some homies. They decided to go bust some jales (moves). He told me he would be back for me, but he never came back.

Later on I found out he had passed away. They got into a high-speed chase with the cops. That night must have been crazy because they were shooting at the cops. I wish he wouldn't have been there. But you could've expected that from him. I mean he didn't get the name Criminal for nothing. He was just enjoying his vida loca because this is how this crazy life goes. RIP Criminal & Lil Rascal.

-Troubles

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear that you lost your friend. But why do you think he wanted to live his life that way? Do you think he wanted to die? What can you learn from his death? What was he enjoying? He was enjoying his life a little too much that he passed away? Do you think that he was actually enjoying his life so much that he wanted to die? That doesn't make any sense. We hope that you don't get the wrong idea and try to enjoy your life too and then something might happen to you.

Drifting On A Memory

So far in my life I've had two people really close to me die. One is my grandpa and the other is my homie Bash. It's been eight years since my grandpa has died and his legacy lives on in his children and grandchildren. The homie Bash's legacy lives on in his hood and in his son Joseph Jr. who is now four and a half months.

It's been a year since my boy has been gone. Damn I don't know what else to say about this topic. But I just want them to know that I love them forever.

-Sarah "G"

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about your boy and your grandfather. We're glad to hear that their legacy lives on. How do you keep it alive?

I Thought He Loved Me

As I lay down on my bed in my cell, I start to think about my so-called baby, the guy that made me complete. The guy that said that he loved me but only really hated me and wanted to mess with my heart.

I ask myself why he did that, when I only gave him my heart. I always tried to do everything he liked or do what he wanted just to make him happy. I loved him with all my mind. But then I hated him with all my heart. This is for the one that stole and played with my heart like a game.

-L

From The Beat: If the guy is just messing with your mind and heart then leave that sorry punk. You don't deserve that, especially if you went out your way to make him happy. If you treat a guy right and he doesn't treat you the way you should be treated, then leave him. There are plenty of other guys in this world.

Get A Good Job

Hey G-vo Beat? How you doing? It's this abstract minded farmero Troubles from Gilroy once again. Anyways about tonight's topic about something I want to accomplish.

One thing is that I want to get a good paying job because with a good job I will have a lot of things and I will be able to buy things I need and want. But I'm running short on words so till next time to all my homeboys stay up.

-Troubles

From The Beat: Well, you didn't really tell us very much in this piece, Troubles. How will you get a good-paying job? What do you have to do to prepare yourself? What kind of things would you like to buy?

My Fears

I don't do anything to overcome my fears. I try to forget about my fears. Then they just become thoughts. I still think about them but I try not to because when I do I get flashbacks and about a thousand memories come in my head. Well Beat, that's all.

-Corina

From The Beat: Is that how you deal with your fears - by just forgetting about them? Have you ever tried confronting them? Sometimes your biggest fears can't just be forgotten. You gotta confront them. Cause the fear of failure is something you can't just forget. You gotta work at it so you can be successful.

Overcoming Fear

My fears are losing someone close to me when I'm in here, like a family member or a homie. Damn, that would hella suck. I don't think fear makes a person weak because everyone had feared or been scared at least once in their life. So fear doesn't make a person weak.

Fear can stop you from doing something negative or stupid, but sometimes fear helps you. People try to hide from fear, but fear makes you a stronger person because you know what to expect next time. So instead of hiding, you can go through the fear.

-Tc

From The Beat: How do you deal with your fear of losing someone close to you when you're locked up? We think the only solution for that fear is to get out of here and not to get locked up again!

I Love Christmas

My favorite holiday would be Christmas because I am blessed to be with my family on that day, and I love to give gifts to my family and they love to give me stuff and I love the food they make at my house.

-Chris

From The Beat: Have you ever noticed how people tend to be nicer to each other on Christmas Day, too? Thanks for sharing a bit of your "Christmas Spirit"

What I Want To Do When I Get Out

What I can't wait to do when I get out is to go to school, do better in school, stop doing bad at home, treat my family better, and show them more respect.

I don't want to leave my family for some stupid stuff because my family comes first but damn I also want to fix things with my lady that is three months pregnant. Damn I miss her. I don't know if I should stay with her or not, but all I know is I care about her. But anyways all I know is when I get out I'ma stay out.

-Angel

From The Beat: It's that last line in this piece that gives us the most comfort: You have a great deal of stress, it sounds like: Girl, family, a potential child on the way... the first thing to think on is the promise you make to yourself in this last sentence. What will you need to do (and give up) in order to make sure you stay out?

Regret

As I lay in my bed
I start getting in my head
Feeling regret for what I've done
At the time it was just for fun
I think about all the people I hurt
Tears drip down my face
I feel like such a disgrace
Maybe if I used my heart instead of my head
I wouldn't feel regret while laying in my bed.

-Crystal

From The Beat: It's all right to feel regretful for something that you did. That means you recognize and acknowledge the fact that you did something that maybe you knew you shouldn't have done. But on the flip side, there is nothing you can do to turn back the hands of time. All you can do now is learn from your mistakes and plan ahead so you won't repeat the same mistakes over and over. Keep your head up. It's not the end of the world. We're not saying that you can't feel regretful but what's done is done. And the only thing you can change now is yourself and the decisions you will make; that will affect your future.

Goals

What I want to accomplish in life is that I want to have a better future. I don't want to end up in prison, dead, or have something bad happen to me and affect me for the rest of my life.

Daisy, when I get out I'mma try to do good. That's what I always say, but this time I'm for real. I'm tired of being in this place and I don't like being told what to do when to do it. I'm a leader not a follower. I'm tired of hearing some of my family talk shhh 'cause I'm in here they don't think I can do good for myself. They think the worst of me but I don't care, I got people that care about me like my parents my sisters, my man and some of my homies and that's all I need to keep me standing. Haters can hate.

To all locked up: Keep your head up and don't let time get to you.

-Troubles

From The Beat: It sounds like you know what you need to do to turn your life around, so we suggest you do it. If you have such a strong support system lean on them and ask them for help to help yourself.

How Do You Overcome Fears?

Hey what up Beat? This is your girl from this girls' unit. Well today's topic is about how you overcome your fears.

Well, one thing I do fear is losing my brother. I mean he's already getting locked up and I didn't want that to happen 'cause I'm very close to him and he is already getting three years and I never wanted him to get long-term, but then again, he made his mistakes and now he has to pay the time. But losing my family is my fear. They are my best friends - my everything.

Even when I run from my problems, I always have my brother to run to and it's crazy, 'cause we're a year apart, but he's just my everything. I'll take a bullet for him. He's hella funny and streetwise and, when it comes to me, we're like double trouble. Ha ha ha...! but I always miss him.

I try not to stress 'cause he made his own problems, but what's crazy is that we're always on the run or locked up. I want that to stop 'cause I don't want to live that life no more. I need him to accomplish his programs and that's all I got to say about my brother, 'cause he's my biggest fear and my family. Well, I'm out but sending my love and big hugs to my brother. Love you bro.

- Rocha

From The Beat: You are lucky to have a best friend who is also your brother. Perhaps if you lead the way and start getting your life together and stop being locked up and on the run, than he will follow your example.

Rest In Peace Homie

What's up Beat this is about my homie who died. And I remember when he was the big homie and I was the youngster. We were big dogs, always down to ride, until he died. He was my best homie.

Big Looney when I heard you died I got so pissed off I wanted to cry I got his name tatted on me I remember when we used to get drunk and high and now I'm doing time.

Rest In Peace Big Looney.

-Moska

From The Beat: We're sorry for your loss. What do you think he would say if he could talk to you now? What kind of advice do you think he would have for you? Do you think he would want you to change so you could get out of the system? Or would he want you to stay in the game? Do you think that he would have regrets about his own life?

Bar-b-q

My favorite birthday is when my homeboys had a bar-b-q for me. I was home chillin', and then I went to my homeboys' pad. When they all saw me they just yelled out, "Surprise!"

At least I know that they care for me. That is my favorite birthday.

-a surprised homie

From The Beat: What a great little piece! What age were you turning?

One Thing I Want to Accomplish in my Life

When I get out the hall, I want to go back to school. And later, when I'm in college, I want to be an intern in a fashion agency, so then I could learn how to build my own clothing line or just work in a fashion agency. I can't wait!!

-Skittle Squad

From The Beat: These sound like really good goals to have for yourself. By your writing, we can tell that you are smart and can make it - so we hope to go to the mall and see a "Skittle Squad" label one day.

My Uncle's Unexpected Death

When my uncle passed away no one expected it. He was under his van working on it when it fell on him an' he had a heart attack. It was a trip seeing him there dying, not being able to do shhh. I was hella young, but I remember seeing him get taken away by the ambulance.

That was the first time I seen death close up, and it's cold 'cause it was my uncle I was closest to. Now my tia and primos (aunt and cousins) keep pictures of him all around so that his presence stays felt throughout the house.

La muerte siempre sorprende (Death always surprises...)

-Piece Of Mind

From The Beat: How old were you? It clearly is one of those sharp memories 'cause you still remember the details. The terrible thing about death is that, whether expected or not, when it comes there's nothing that can be done.

Paying The Toll

I never meant to hurt you
I love you too much
But I guess sometimes love ain't enough
To keep me under control
But now I'm paying the toll
Remember my heart will always be yours
Even though I'm behind locked doors.

-Crystal

From The Beat: What toll are you paying? Are you paying it because you hurt someone? Who did you hurt? Sometimes when we hurt the ones we care about, we are actually hurting ourselves also.

Fears

Hey Beat, today I'm going to write about fears. My biggest fear would have to be something happening to my family and I am not home to help them. I want to be able to help my family when they are in need.

-Shex

From The Beat: There's only one way to put this fear behind you, and that's to put incarceration behind you...

Alone in a Children's Shelter

In the past years I was alone no one to watch me or feed me. I was in the children's shelter.

They kept me there for 2 years. I didn't get to see my sisters or my mom. I was there wondering when I would be able to see my things again.

It was a long time before I seen my house.

-Unknown

From The Beat: Did you find people you could connect with and care about in the Children's Shelter? Staff, other young people? Teachers? And what was it like reconnecting with your family after all this? Let us know!

Close Person Dat Passed

What's popping Beat? This yo' uso Siaki dropping some lines.

The thing I keep for memory of my cousin Big Al AKA Brice wall, is pictures of him and keep him in my heart. At my grandma's house we have hella shirts of his name and picture on it. And when I was out I always go and visit his grave every other week.

Well, my head ain't thinking right. So I am about to end it right here. A'ight. Sa love. Gone.

-Giant Samoa

From The Beat: It sounds like you're keeping your cousin alive in your memories. What do you mean, "My head ain't thinking right"?

In The Past Years I Lost Two Girls

In the past years I had two good relationships with two girls that both were really good to me but like a jackass I messed up both relationships I put both of them through hella stuff and I regret it.

-Maddog

From The Beat: What did you learn from these two painful losses? What will you do differently next time?

When Someone Close Passes

Death is so close, yet so near
I've seen many fall but yet no tears
My life has been revolving around gang's murder and fears,

Death is so close, yet so near,
My great grandma to uncles to homies dead in the ground,

'Round an' 'round we go searching for lost souls,
Holes put through shirts from hot steel that hurts Death is so close, yet so near,

Why do I live my life with no fear
When I don't know if I'll see tomorrow,
Sorrow and remorse is never felt in this game we call life,

Death is so close, yet so near
But yet no tears for on going years.

-Lil' C

From The Beat: We there are things in this life worth fearing, even if you don't fear death itself. We prize freedom enough to fear losing it.

Everybody Has Fears

Hey q-vole Beat Within? It's this homeboy Troubles coming at you from the max unit. But I'm going to write about fears.

I think everybody has fears, no matter what they say or how hard they think they are. Personally, I don't think it takes a stronger person to say and admit they have fears than not to. Some people say they ain't scared of shhh, but they're bluffing if they say that.

But my time is up, so till next time, this abstract minded garlicstero is out. Short on words, so till next time, stay up.

-Troubles

From The Beat: We agree with you, Troubles. People who claim they're afraid of nothing are either fronting or not firmly in touch with reality. But fear doesn't change many people's behaviors. What are you afraid of, Señor Garlicstero?

My Loved One Passes

Wassup Beat? This be your Viet boy coming from the max.

Well, today's topic I am going to write about my father that passed away. He was what gave me life. I loved him deeply and will never forget them good old days I have with him growing up living on welfare, but he made the best of it for us.

One way I keep him alive is deeply in my heart, and the other way is having his shrine in side of my house, where most Asians do when one passes away. Much love and respect Dad, look over the family from up above.

Alright Beat, I'm out lates.

-Viet Ox

From The Beat: We don't read many pieces in The Beat of wonderful memories of fathers. We know you cherish the memory of your father, and we hope you respect his presence by living the kind of life he wanted you to live.

Free as A Bird

I would be a bird so I could fly away and go to Hawaii and just be free.

And then go to Amsterdam and spit game at the girl birds. Then go to Mexico and start a family.

-Tommy

From The Beat: This is exactly the life we would wish for you as a human being. We wish that you could be free, and find a girl, and then start a family. What can you make this wish into a reality?

Lion With Heart

If I could be any animal I would be a Lion. A lion is strong and has much pride and fights to be on top.

The lion is the top of the food chain which describes me being in this place you show no fear and you have to be strong and on top. You can't let no one mess with you or you get took advantage of. A lion has heart and courage. That's why I choose to be a lion.

-Lion

From The Beat: The lion is strong, powerful, wild, and - endangered. Do you feel that way too sometimes, endangered? And what steps are you taking to stay free and out of a cage?

Story Part II

"Dang, where the heck am I at?" Ben said to himself.

What's that smell, it smells like rotten corpses, I was in the room where the Lucifers had their dinner at, there was a dinner table with 12 chairs filled, one of the chairs has a child that looked so real, I was starting to believe the rumors, I was so scared I threw up in the fireplace.

I heard the kid scream, I turned and ran to the door, when I seen the family eating dinner at the table. Ms. Lucifer told me to "come and eat dinner with your family son." I "I'm not your son you crazy beech!"

"Not yet." Ha ha ha the whole family laughed like they were crazy.

"Dang Jesse where's your brother? I can't find the basement, well we can't leave without him."

"We're not, don't worry, if we split up it will be easier, alright Angel?"

Angel started in the living room, dang I was kind of scared, but I need to be a big guy now. The living room TV turned on, on the screen was 12 kids a mother and father, I got the heck scared, I just looked closer and closer at the TV to see Ben in there screaming for help.

I turned around to catch a little kid with a bloody knife and a vicious smile. He started saying, "free us from the devil. And if you don't you'll be part of the family too." Ha ha ha.

I hit the kid with a lamp and ran out the door and ran into Mr. Lucifer. He had the ugliest face I'd ever seen. His ear was gone and half of his face looked burnt. Mr. Lucifer grabbed me by my hair and dragged me into the cellar. He threw me down the stairs. I suddenly woke up screaming in pain, a little kid was ripping out my finger nails one by one. I had to think fast I was hurting. I kicked the dresser and a candle fell on the kid's face, his face started melting like candle wax. He started to say thanks for freeing me from the evil ones.

Dang Ben was so scared he ran out and tried to get to the roof. He hit the staircase when suddenly a kid came out and slashed his heel tendon with a razor blade, I screamed so loud I passed out. When I came to my sense, I was in a big room...

-Bird

From The Beat: Thank you for the second part of your story. You have quite the creative streak. Do readers get to find out what happens to the characters?

Accomplishment

There are a couple of things I would like to accomplish in my life. But the biggest things are to be successful in a happy way. I would like to be happy and be able to have anything I want. And I know I'll appreciate it because I'll work for it really hard.

I would like to be someone my parents are proud of and people look up to. Basically I would just like to be successful in every way, and I know someday I will, because I never give up and I believe in dreams coming true.

-Rosita

From The Beat: We believe in you also! You sound pretty confident. Dreams do come true especially if you work hard at what you do. We hope that you get out the halls and become that person you are talking about. You have the potential to do whatever you wish to do. We are glad to hear that you wanna be a positive and successful person!

When Someone Close To Me Passes

When someone close to you passes, I keep their memory alive by telling people about him and what he stands for and he is a good man. He was my grandpa he taught me a lot and how to be a man. He was a very wise man. He taught me right from wrong.

-Joe

From The Beat: We like what you wrote, but you need to tell us more details. What made your grandpa a good man? Why do you think he was wise? If he were with you right now, what wisdom would he give you? Would you listen?

A Lil Tip

Listen to a mind that's far from malnourished to those who put off education, you'll soon be flourished in a society filled with lies

you gotta learn the truth, so take a piece of pie learning thru experience, it's nothin' nice

don't live on chances, like shakin' dice

know the facts and ignore the rumors

my knowledge keeps on growin' like a tumor

I stay rich with self dedication

so no I don't sniff my roomie's medication

I'm an Educated Gangster

I shoot much respect to those who educate all

I do the same and I will never fall.

-Educated Gangster

From The Beat: Building our wisdom and our skills is the only way to be successful in the harsh reality of our world. Your rap touches on the importance of education—not education for the sake of education, but education for making it in the world.

When Someone Close To You Passes

All I remember was my homie named Brian called me and saying that he's going to Nevada to go see his family.

I said, "What's wrong?" and he said, "Emergency, family problem."

I wanted to go with him but I couldn't that day. He left to Nevada by himself. Next day his mother called me saying he's dead. He was going about 100 mph and flipped his car five times and died at the scene. I still remember his voice and I keep thinking that I should've went with him and maybe he went there without the accident. RIP Brian. Gone.

-Y.C

From The Beat: What a terrible thing to happen. We're sorry. You can never know whether you would have changed things if you were along or would have died alongside Brian. Car crashes — mostly from speeding — kill more people in this country every year than all the shootings in all the cities added together. The moral of the story: Don't drive 100 mph!

I Am a Drug Addict

I just wanted to say being pressured sucks. I have been pressured into doing a lot of things including drugs, my name is Vinny and I am an addict.

I am an addict because of being pressured. My friends pressured me into smoking pot for the first time when I was 12 or 13. I loved it the feeling of smoke in my lungs.

Ever since that day I've been using drugs, in a way it renewed my life. My friends pressured me. I felt that I had to do it. I don't know if I would let anyone pressure me again.

-Vinny

From The Beat: Do you have any kind of support now that you want to quit? A group, a program, positive friends? Because it sounds like you have really suffered from this.

Give Me a Penny

If I could get a penny for every person that was worse off than me I would be a very rich person. When I think about struggle the first thing that comes to mind are all the devastating violent events that have happened in the past few years such as 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina.

-D-Mani

From The Beat: Are you suggesting that your own life or the lives of your peers are not tough? Or, are you suggesting that it is one thing to struggle because of things you have done to yourself, and it is another thing to struggle because of a natural disaster?

Warehouse

I was at the warehouse in Morgan Hill hell a years ago with my boy. We wanted to steal some movies. I didn't want to because they had cameras and detectors, but I did it anyway.

I went inside with my boy I stole a video of the dudes from south park. I walked out the door and I was shocked I didn't get caught.

-Victor

From The Beat: What do you think would have happened if you'd gotten caught? Was that your first time stealing? Did it start you on a path? Did you steal more later? Tell us more!

Like Tupac Said..

In the past years, I felt that I put my mom in most pain. Whenever I get into trouble, my mom, most of the time pay the price. Whenever I don't go to school, I have to go to court, and my mom has to pay for it.

When I get locked up, my mom has to pay for me being in here. Like Tupac, "There ain't no way I can pay you back, but my plan is to show you that I understand."

-Sok

From The Beat: You could pay her back by thriving, though. You could pay her back by having a good life, where you are happy and proud of yourself, no? Because that's what your mother really wants for you - she wants you to be happy in life!

Quitting

Dear Beat I'm going to talk about a time I've been pressured I've been pressured into smoking weed two years ago. Now I smoke every day but now I've been locked up for 3 weeks and now I'm not smoking.

I'm glad I got locked up 'cause I stopped smoking and I'm not healthier and I stopped smoking cigarettes. I'm glad I got locked up, but then I'm not.

-Chris

From The Beat: Does it feel different in your mind now that your mind is clearer? Do you feel stronger in yourself? What about your lungs? Will you try to not smoke anything when you get out as well?

Reminiscing

Q-vole Beaters, pues, next week I'm going to get released and in my last days I've been hearing all the lectures in my head for the last few weeks and years. The lectures that have left a permanent remembrance comes from my mother. The reason why I am reminiscing is because I have to decide what I'm going to do in life when I get out and also because my mother wants me to chance my ways. But you know what's up it wasn't worth getting locked up for seven months for being a passenger in a stolen car and it was a misdemeanor.

Pues, the other homies got another chance, because they were first timers, but what I don't understand is why they came back after they got released? I see them in the lunch movements and say to myself, damn he came back and just for some violations that wasn't worth it.

-Chueco

From The Beat: The question that you bring-up is one that many people are confused by as well. Why do so many young people return to juvenile hall? Dig deep and think about this question: many adults and professionals are searching for this answer too.

A Kiss

The kiss of love
is as sweet as a white dove
above.

the texture of her lips
turns my head upside down and into flips.
the warmth of her tongue makes me reminisce on all the
times of fun.

as I close my eyes
the kiss of love takes me to a place high in skies.

the taste of her lips is so sweet

that very first kiss swooped me off my feet.

now she is all mine

and I will never forget the very first time.

for the homies that want to hate and be shady

it's nothing to a boss because she always gonna be my
lady

I love you baby.

-Litos

The Beat Within: To be in love can be a wonderful thing, but it is only a false love if we are not inspired to do greater things and be better people. Evaluate this for yourself: what are you inspired to do with yourself?

My Favorite Holiday

My favorite holiday is Thanksgiving 'cause we get some good food and we get to say what we are thankful for. We meet with the whole family and chill with cousins and my whole family and that's coo'.

-Joe

From The Beat: Were you able to spend this Thanksgiving at home with your family where you belong? Who does the cooking on Thanksgiving? Do you watch football on TV? Play games? Shoot hoops? These are the kind of details that will make your piece much stronger.

Reading and Working Out

What's crackin' Beat, it's ya boy Strae One out of Gilroy and it's my first time being locked up, but I've been down for 2 months. It sucks in the hall -- nothing to do but sleep work out or read.

it's pretty depressing but I'm just counting the days till I can see my lady. Alright, got to go peace.

-Strae One

From The Beat: On the bright side, at least you are doing the best you can to take care of your body and mind while you are in jail. We hope you stay on that positive tip when you get out too! Do you think you will?

Straighten Me Up

Well well, well, Fonzo is back up in this mutha sucka oh well there is nothing to do now, no turning back but um yea. Today I'ma be writing about how I wanna accomplish one thing when I get out. Well, the thing I wanna accomplish, well I was doing good when I was in the outs I had a job going to programs and doing everything I was supposed to be doing.

But I got caught up in the wrong moment, but what I'm trying to do is have my own family since I'm 18. I know I'm too young but I'm almost 19 as well. I think if I have a family it might straighten me up a little. I am also hoping for a good job that will be enough to support my family. Well Beatles, gots to go.

-Fonzo

From The Beat: What are you talking about when you mean "family"? Are you trying to have a baby or something? We hope you prepare yourself for all the stress and financial hole you might be in if you decide to have a baby right now. We're not saying it's anything bad, but we're just trying to tell you to think about it. A baby needs a lot of caring and hate to say it but babies are expensive. You have to put your whole life on pause. If you think you're mature enough and financially ready, then go ahead and do your thing.

Lesson On Fear

Fear is an emotion that I've conquered easy
Many people attempted the fight but came out puffin' and wheezin'

'Cause they haven't acquired the mentality I have
happily reach

So if you are willing to listen I'll be willing to teach
Life is full of struggles so don't let them get you down
Learn how to pick yourself up after these couple of rounds

Learn that emotions wont get you far
'Cause if you don't you'll find yourself wishing upon a star

I hope I have helped and you have learn something from this

'Cause the last thing I want you doing is making that wish.

-Chimy

From The Beat: Good flow! What wish are you talking about? 'The I wish I never did that.' Phrase. You seem to have conquered your fears without any kind of problems, now how can you show somebody that wants to know how to conquer their fears, how to conquer them.

Remembering

I remember those days
Kicking it back with you my friend
I cherish every memory
I wish I could relive again
Side by side.

We homies for life
I feel the same pain every single night
Reliving good times
Rewinding back in mind
Why my homie had to lose his life
Back in '05

Countless eyes I seen cry 18 years young
Gone laid to rest I know you done your best
When that day comes
Meet me at the gates
Sing hay!

-Ace

From The Beat: We're very sad to hear about your boy. How do you keep his memory alive? Can you reminisce good memories about your boy without it being painful? Do you have memories of him that make you laugh?

RIP Pelon

What I did to help my homeboy's legacy live on is, I bought a shirt that said RIP Jose Luis Pelon Portela.

Well we threw a barbecue for him one month after his death it wasn't a celebration cause we weren't too happy, but every time I use to drink on the outs I would drink his favorite beer, which was "Tecate" and also our whole school had a memorial for his death.

Everybody that knew him... we walked were he passed. There was more than 250 people

-Listo

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about your homeboy's death. How did he pass away? Was it gang violence? Why are there so many young people dying? Why are youngstas taking lives like it was the thang to do? How can you prevent it?

On My Mind

I'm not feeling the topics tonight so I'm gonna write something on my mind. I just got back from a visit and found out my court got continued again till Jan 18. Well beat I've been here for a year now and still haven't been to court. But hopefully some shhh happens soon.

Well Beat I'm out of time so until next week much love to all in the hall and the other with me keep it solid and stay strong.

-Nok

From The Beat: We don't know what's going on but hopefully everything turns out for the better. Keep your spirits high and try to take advantage and learn all you can while you're in there.

My Court Date

Q-vole Beat! It's Grumpy coming out the honor unit. It's been a while since I've written in the Beat. Well I'm going to talk about my court date, which is tomorrow. I'm so happy that I'm gonna get out with my man. He has been in here for awhile and I haven't lived with him for over a year 'cause I have been locked up and so has he.

This is like a new beginning for both of us. I just want to say that even through hard times you can make it through whatever. To all that have been here for a while or are facing hard tiempo (time), keep your head up and don't let no one get you down. Just know you will be out one day! Alrato, one love.

-Crystal

From The Beat: You're right. Hard times come and go. And that's what life is all about. How we deal with those hard times. Anybody that thinks they're gonna go through life without any kind of hard times are wrong. No matter how rich or famous you are, we all are gonna end up losing our relatives, family, friends, and nothing can bring them back. That's a fact of life. It's how we deal with the hardships that's really gonna show what kind of person we are. Keep your head up.

Do The Crime Do The Time: Like A Schedule

What is it?! It's that y.g. Sneaks coming from San Jose. Seems like we all say we hate it here but no matta what if you bang best believe you're comin' back. It's all just like a schedule. I've been in and out for about two years.

Finally, they got a good charge on me, assault and battery with great body damage sitting in the max. Then to think bout it I'm missin' Christmas, New Years but it's all a part of life. Well that's all for now Beat.

-Sneaks

From The Beat: You're definitely right about if you banging you're coming back to jail. Cause if you leading that lifestyle there's two things that for sure are guaranteed, and that's jail and death. Do you wanna die? Cause you already know what comes with the territory. Then again that's part of lie also, isn't it? And you sound like you might be changing your mind and getting ready to fight that system schedule. Get out!

My Lady Died

I lost someone close to me four years ago when I was twelve years old. My lady died in E.P.A. she was shot by a gang member cause of drugs. I was deep into drug slanging, making hella money and it caught up to me and the shooter ended up taking my lady's life.

She meant a lot to me but I've learned to live with it. It ain't no thang now. Four years past and still strong. I drink every year around the time of her death 'cause I got hella memories RIP D-D August 17, 1991- July 17, 2003 much love you are never forgotten.

-FiftyOneFifty

From The Beat: That's a sad story. Was your girl gang related? How did she get involved with your lifestyle. Or was she a victim because the rivals were trying to get to you but got your lady instead? In the end was it all worth it? Was that all that banging and slanging worth your lady's life? Are you still slanging and banging? If you are, why? Time to mature up!

RIP To My Homie

I got to say RIP to my homie that I miss. Me and my homie used to chill at the park. We always used to chill at the park, and we always used to get in trouble.

Man, I miss my homie. Me and him even did time together man he was like my brother. If he got into a fight I had his back Man I miss the old days.

One day he got hit by a car. This was a horrible day, he passed away. RIP to my homie Elmo.

-Sleepy

From The Beat: That must have been a terrible loss. How old were you when it happened? Did you get to go to his funeral? In what ways do you think your life might have been different if he hadn't passed away?

Favorite Holiday

My favorite holiday memory was during Christmas when I see all my family together without arguing. Just jolly smiles on their faces. Still we live a bad life but try to put it aside. Some family members throwing fake smiles.

There are a lot of presents under the tree but not for me. Reminiscing that one day I will have my own family and wish that the things that happened to me would not happen to them. I'm livin' the nightmare before Christmas in this life; my second Christmas missing out without my love ones.

-Lil' K

From The Beat: We understand how you must feel to miss out on the holidays and not be able to spend time with your loved ones. What brings you here? Wouldn't you rather be with your family? What can you do so you won't miss any more holidays?

My Goals

One thing I would want to accomplish are all my goals. They are to pass high school, get a good job, like work for my grandpa and go to trade school so in the future.

When I have my own family I could support them and all that good stuff, ya feel me. Also to make it out the system cuz all this getting locked up is bull shhh. Also make my family proud and show them I am better than that.

Also not to grow up like my pops. I want to be better than him and that's what I want to accomplish.

-Matthew

From The Beat: These are all goals that you can accomplish easily. All it's gonna take is determination and motivation. You can do it. Get outta here and stay outta trouble so you can focus on your goals and accomplish them. Good luck and stay focused!

Not Fearing Anything

The way that I overcome my fears is by not caring what happens after I do what I do. So when I get mad and want to fight I think of my dad when he was locked up and held it down, in there so why cant I?

-Chris

From The Beat: So are you saying that your dad stayed out of fights, or got into fights? Because sometimes "not caring" can be a way of giving up, giving up on the chance for better consequences and a better life. Is that what your saying? Or are we misunderstanding?

A Death In Mexico

Hey what's up Beat? This is your homie Marco coming at you. When someone close to you passes. Well that happened to me once, it happened to me when I was a young teen, when my home girl's dad died in Mexico.

Damn when that happened, I couldn't believe it. I didn't know what to do. But all my family knew her too, so the thing that we did was help them get money for the coffin and to bury him. So that's what I did.

-Marco

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about the loss of your home girl's dad. We are happy to hear that you and your family were a big help to her. That was very nice and thoughtful of you. It also shows the way people can come together for the positive. Can you think of other times in your life when you did that?

My Fears

I do not like big spiders in my room. I won't go in it for a day or two. No, I don't think fear makes you a weak person. Sometimes it will stop me from doing what I'm doing. I will try to graduate from high school

-Monkey

From The Beat: We took out your Christmas piece (which was part of one big piece on three different topics) because it was only two sentences long. Next time, don't write on all the topics. Choose the one that is the most interesting to you, and only write about it.

My Family Hurting

My biggest fear is my family hurting. When I was a youngster I didn't have my mom or dad. I had my grandparents.

Now that they are gone I only have my aunt and uncle. I don't know if I can get over the fear of my family hurting.

-Youngster

From The Beat: First your parents, then your grandparents? That must have been so hard - but it's a blessing to know that you still have your aunt and uncle. They must feel great fear for you too, knowing that you have been caught up. When you get out, will you be living with them? Who are the other people in life that you are close to?

Fear Is

I believe fear is power. Control it and nothing can stop you, but if you let it control you, you'll never even get started. To control it you must

1. Be aware of it
2. Remain calm
3. Know you can overcome it.

To this day I have only one fear and even that is starting to become nothing but an old memory.

-Wolverine

From The Beat: Sounds like you're a brave guy! Sounds like you know what you're doing? How can you help your peers to be courageous like you and help them fight their fears? Also - what about mental fears, like fear of failing, or trying out new things, entering unfamiliar environments? How does a person beat those?

My Grandma

I remember my grandma passed away I was really sad when I got the call from my aunt and told us my grandma died.

We were all really sad and my whole family flew out to see her friend. I stayed a week over there and it was nice because it was the first time the whole family was together.

I even got to meet some aunts I haven't met before and some of my cousins. Well yea that's my story I'm out. In loving memory Mama Rest In Peace I love you and miss you.

-Mason

From The Beat: They say that funerals are for the living – and it's true that as sad as they are, they also give us a chance to reconnect with all our loved ones, and to be united as a family in saying farewell. It's crazy how grief and joy can live side by side, isn't it?

RIP Grandma

My grandma passed away. It was really hard for me because she was like my second mom. It wasn't only hard for me but the rest of my family to. Especially for my mom. The way I help myself remember all the good times is by looking at pictures.

It makes me cry when I think of it but I'm not tripping because they are happy tears. I'm going to miss going to the Zoo after Church every Sunday with her, but I know she's in a better place. One of these days I will see her again hopefully.

-Corn-bread

From The Beat: Your grandma sounds wonderful – would you go to the zoo on your own, even know that she's gone, just to carry on the family tradition? Maybe you could take a little cousin?

My Ultimate Fear

I have a fear that my Grandpa Jessie might pass away, because he's in the hospital. He had an aneurism and his head won't stop bleeding. So, everyday, I pray for him everyday and almost every second.

I know he probably don't remember me. But if he did, I would be a big disappointment to him and I would hate to be a disappointment because I'm going down the same road as my dad, but I'm going to try hard to NOT get life like my dad. 'Cause me and my dad are disappointments to my grandpa, so all this stress is on me 'cause my grandpa doesn't want to have another grandchild put away for life like my other cousins. So Beat, that's my fear – loosing my grandpa.

-Minnie Mouse

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing this worry with us. But it seems that along with being afraid of losing your grandfather – you are also worried about your own life. You might not be able to control what happens to your grandfather but you can try and change your own life and make him proud of you – and make you proud of yourself – no matter if he is on this earth or not.

The Rest Of Time

Sitting here in this cold dark room and the only thing running through my mind is how I want to be with you.

When I first laid eyes on you I looked up and thanked God for blessing me with your beauty. As I got to know you I realized we were meant to be, and I was ready to ask you will you be mine, for the rest of time as the days go by?

-Dopey

From The Beat: We hope you find your way back to the girl you wrote this for. And we hope you do all you can to stay with her!

Woffy and Ceaser RIP

What's up Beat. This is about one of my friends that got shot for being posted in his hood. I got a tattoo tatted on me, saying, " In loving Memory Woffy and Ceaser aka Grifo." Ceaser was my uncle. I really miss him and Woffy, that's why I stopped kicking it with my hood.

I remember when we used to kick back and have a blast and I remember it like it was yesterday. When I heard what happened I started to go off on people because I was so mad. I was just barely leaving my hood when it happened. These times I still remember them and I will remember them until I die. Everyday when I'm on the outs I drink a Mickey for them.

-Grifo

From The Beat: It seems that there is even more you could do to show them respect than drinking a Mickey. We say this because you loved them for real – and they would probably be so proud if they could see you get out of the system and break out into the big world, leave the violence and pain behind, find a job where you could be something in life, maybe even start a family of your own. Could you switch to a positive, in their honor? Sounds like you took that step by getting out of your hood, now leave the beer too, and hit the books!

This Fear

You can never get over a fear, cause deep down inside you always have this little part of you that's still scared. Or maybe you think you're no longer afraid and when your fear looks at you in the face – you run, but when you go looking for fear and you find it and then fear runs from you.

-Kanesha

From The Beat: This is a great piece because of the ridiculous logic. At first, when you read it, the piece seems kind of crazy but then reading it again it starts to make a lot of sense. Perhaps 'fear' is just as afraid of us as we are of it.

What's Up Beat?

Today I'm going to write about my biggest fear. Well, my biggest fear is losing my brother. Me and my brother are close. We have a good relationship. It used to be better but it's all right. I'm sure things will get better. Well my brother has always been there for me even when I'm doing something bad. Like when I'm on the run he'll give me money and let me stay at his pad.

My brother never turned his back on me. He helps me out in every way he can. When I need someone to talk to I go to my brother. When I need someone to have my back the one who is always there for me is my brother. I love my brother with all my heart. I'd go crazy if something bad ever happened to my brother. Damn, my brother is my life. He always helps me out. And most of all he cares about me and loves me a lot. I just know it.

Me and him only have each other. Our dad passed away when we were babies. Our mom was somewhere else. So we were both raised with our grandparents. Me and him were never apart. We always told each other we'd never separate. It hurts me not to be able to see him. I think about him all the time. I worry about him just as well. I pray everyday that he's doing good and that nothing happens to him. I just want what's best for him. Well, that's all for today Beat. To everyone else - Good luck and stay up late!!

-Molina

From The Beat: You want the best for your brother. Well we want the best for both of you! We hope that you don't come back to Juvenile hall. You can't spend any time with your brother by coming here. Maybe you should use your brother as a motivation to stay out of jail. That way you can be with your brother whenever you want.

I Need A Job To Keep Me Free

Hi, Beat! What's up? I'm getting out soon and I'm trying to get work so I can make some money and help my mom with some stuff. I really need some work so I can stay away from the hall and have a better life, so in the future I won't have to come back in here and I will stay away from drugs.

-Jimmy

From The Beat: What kind of work would you like? Will you be going to school when you're free again? Do you want to work after school and/or on weekends? Ask your counselor in juvy now for some help in setting you up with a job. Maybe try Safeway.

A New Year's Resolution

My New Year's resolution
Will be part of my solution
Too much garbage in my head
Like the city's pollution
Doing right is an illusion
But I'll get a right conclusion
I got to keep pushing ahead
Not let my body pour out red
So at night, when I go to bed
I get the garbage out my head
So I can sleep with a good dream
I dream of a family
But I don't know what it means
I see my friend
He says, "Stay up!"
But in the morning
When I wake up
I got nobody to keep me up
So I hope for the best
As I grow up and leave the nest
My New Year's resolution
I still got plan the rest
So, as we get to 2008
I pray to God it's not too late
To get a forgiveness plate
But 'til then
I just have to wait

-Sneaky

From The Beat: It's easy to have a lot of garbage in your head nowadays. Maybe being in juvy will give you a time out, a chance to calm down and think through where your life is going and where you want to direct it. Do you want to stay in school? Get some work you like? A career? A family of your own someday? What of all of these are you willing to work for, so you can have the life of your dreams?

Missing My Baby

I'm in here in juvenile hall, stressing because I'm not with my boyfriend, Davonta. I really wouldn't be stressing over him if he was just any old person, but Davonta is the person I have to think about when I first wake up, to keep me motivated during the day. Naw, I ain't strung, it's just I know he cares about me and I care about him. Me and my babe been together for nearly three years, and just recently he told me that he wanted me to have his babe, just out of nowhere. I was so surprised, because we never talked about stuff like that, so it was like, damn, I love you, Vonta.

-Precious

From The Beat: It's a long way from being in juvy to becoming a mother. Do you think you should consider what you want for your own life now? Graduate from high school? Go to college? Explore the world? Have a job, a career? How does Devonda encourage you to live your life? How does your being in juvy affect him? You definitely are not ready to have a family of your own! Trust us. It would be wise to discuss his plans for your living situation and ideas about your future together, before you make up your mind whether to have his child.

You're The One

You're the one
I wanna spend my life with
Have kids and die with
Argue and fight with
He never was that type of dude
But at the end of the night
I did what I had to do
I'm his chick
The one he spends quality time with
Hold hands and cry with
Be the girl who promised to never lie
Or deny shhh
Be your ride or die chick
The one he loves
And puts no one but God above
This is what I want to find

- Star Pebbles

From The Beat: You sound like you've totally proven yourself to this guy, but that he hasn't come through for you. You don't have to do anything for him or anyone else that in your heart you don't want to do or that you believe is wrong. You deserve a stand up guy who will encourage you to do what's right.

Free Candy For Halloween

My favorite holiday is Halloween. I like it 'cause you get free candy. Free candy is important to me, because I save money from not buying it myself. One year I was a goblin. I watched "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory." It reminded me of Halloween. Halloween in my town is pure madness, full of tricks and treats and plenty of pirate-themed houses.

-Eric

From The Beat: Halloween in your town sounds like so much fun. How did people respond to your goblin costume? Were they scared? Did they know it was you underneath?

My Ice Cream Cake Concussion

I like my birthday. Birthday is "cumpleaños," en español. It used to almost rain on my birthday, but it never did. Usually I have an ice cream cake on my birthday. One year my dad threw the cake in my face. One time I watched "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory." I like chocolate, so I make my mom buy me a chocolate ice cream cake.

One time I slept in a sewer on my birthday. I met Crazy Mike and he sung "Happy Birthday" in Chinese. We robbed people for their Chinese food, but Crazy Mike just drank the soy sauce. Then I woke up with a concussion, because I passed out when my dad hit me in the head with the frozen ice cream cake.

-Crazy Mike

From The Beat: We can't tell from your writing if you are Crazy Mike or are you writing about Crazy Mike. Anyway, your father throwing your frozen birthday cake at you on your birthday has created a birthday you'll never forget. Maybe you shouldn't "make" your mom buy you one, or rob people of their food. Maybe ice cream cakes are hexed for you for now, so what other kind of birthday cake would you like? How about German chocolate cake with coconut frosting?

My Fear Is To Be A Bad Man

My fear is to be a bad man. I like to be a good man, but I got a load of friends. I don't know why they is my friend, but I know they got my back and I got (theirs.) But if I go to the hall, they don't.

-Chris

From The Beat: Since your fear is that you could become a bad man, can you figure out now what you have to stop or start doing, to be a good man? You write that you're in the hall and your friends aren't, so do you feel like they've betrayed you somehow? If so, do you think you should think about whether they're your real friends?

What I'd Like To Overcome

One thing in my life I would like to overcome would be my stupidity. What I mean by that are the stupid, childish things I do that get me in here. If I could overcome that, my life would be on a natural high. Soon I'm moving to Reno and I expect to do a lot better in life.

-Lil' Looney

From The Beat: We wish you well in Reno. The air is good there, in the mountains. That's the kind of high you need. Stay clean and be smart.

My Fears

All I do when I need to get over my fears is ignore them. My fear is nothing scary. It's being locked up forever and being away from my family. The thing about fear is that it does make you a weak person, but by the time you get over it, it makes you stronger than you were before.

-Shane

From The Beat: Some fears are healthy. There are certain things we should all be afraid to do. That kind of fear can keep us alive. We think the fear of being locked up forever is a pretty healthy fear. It's a fear that could prevent you from doing some pretty stupid and ugly things, if you didn't ignore it. Be selective about which fears to ignore and which to pay attention to. And respond to all your fears as reasonably as you can. That will make you a stronger person.

What I Would Like To Accomplish

One thing I would like to accomplish is to get out of juvenile hall and I would like to get off of probation. Also, I would like to stop causing my mother problems. I would like to make her happy. One thing I would do to make her happy is clean the house, and go to school and not cause her stress.

-Diego

From The Beat: You will get out of the hall. Getting off of probation depends on how what you do when you're out. Cleaning the house is easy. Going to school can become a habit, a good habit, something you do without thinking. Save the thinking for when you get inside the classroom. Do these things in good faith, and your family will be much happier. You can be a hero by just being good.

What I'd Like To Accomplish

One thing I would like to accomplish in life is to get a high school diploma, get off probation, and stop smoking weed. When I get out of my program I want to go to the University of Hawaii, play football and try to get drafted to the NFL so I can help my family out.

-Ernesto

From The Beat: You are a man with high ambitions, and good intentions. Some of those things you can do right away, including helping your family. You can start studying and stop smoking immediately, and that would be a big help to your family. The time they spend worrying about you can then be spent on more productive things. Everyone wins. Start today.

Go Ahead

Go ahead, pretend to be my friend.
I see the darkness beyond the bend.
Your intentions are as cold as an Alaskan winter.
I hardly doubt my impression of you.
Look into the mirror.
There's evil beneath the placid surface.
I choose to answer your two sided questions
with silence.

-Jackson

From The Beat: We're wondering who this 'friend' is. For a second, we wondered if it was the fellow in the mirror. But we know that guy. We like him. We hope you do, too. This, by the way, is a good poem.

What I'd Like To Accomplish

Well, I've chosen to write about what I'd like to accomplish in my life. My name is Jordan. I want to get my diploma, get a job, and go to a community college. But the most important thing is to be the best father I can be to my son. But for now, I have to keep my head up and never let it down. And just keep striving to reach my goals. Much love and respect.

-Jordan

From The Beat: Good to see you write a serious piece Jordan. Those are good goals. And if you work hard, we know you'll achieve them. We're glad you're serious about being a good dad. We know you know the importance of that.

What I Want To Accomplish

The one thing that I want to accomplish is to get the heck off of probation. I'm tired of being locked up, away from my baby's mama and my family. Plus, I have one more baby on the way. I got to change my life around because it's time for me to keep the three of them safe and healthy.

-Drifter

From The Beat: Time to keep yourself safe and healthy too. So there are four good reasons to get out of the hall and to get off probation. We suggest you make a list of what you'll have to do to get off probation. Consider that your probation officer would like to see you off his or her list. Be very clear about what's expected of you, and then set about doing those things. Determination is at least half the battle. Work hard and don't give up. Many people are counting on you. We think you're ready for the challenge.



Take Care

I was at a ranch called Fout Springs. I ran from the program with three others. I just want to say to them: take care. I hope their court dates go good. I got them kicked out of ranch because of my dumb idea of running. They were truly real homies and I have much respect for them. They are from other counties. I will see you guys someday. I have no more placements to go to. Hopefully they will send me to Philadelphia to live with my aunt.

-Kevin

From The Beat: We hope you get to go there too. They call Philadelphia The City Of Brotherly Love. You need some brotherly love, Kevin.

Since she's past

I sit and think of all that has past
The pain don't leave but forever last
Feeling like a well structured cast

I know I will never forget
The time I spent with you, I'll never regret
I wish I could go back in time

To see you,
To hug you,
To kiss you,
To hold you,

To make up what was lost, even when you were mine
Now that you're gone, I feel weak inside

My muscles tense up
My mind is chemically unbalanced
My feelings seem to take over mentally, physically,
emotionally

Scared of what my future holds without you here,
I'm brought to thick long lasting tears

As all I feel I can do is hide
Since you've been gone, I'm overwhelmed with struggle

It's hard to concentrate on anything
With time not only passing but on the double
I can only think of when we were together

I'll remember you from now until forever
I miss you ma'ma

- Jeffery

From The Beat: There's no doubt that losing your mother is hard and a huge struggle. You're not alone, many kids have lost their parents. Now is the time to be a man and be strong by making choices that'll make her proud of who you will become.

Being A Good Parent

One thing I want to accomplish is being a good mother to my son.

I want to be there for my son by going back to school.
I want to be an Obstetrician because I love babies and that's just something I would love to do, also I want to prove to everyone that I can do good.

I want to have a good life for me and my son.
I never want to be away from my son ever again because that's my life and I never want to be away from him this long ever again.

- Kimberly

From The Beat: You've clearly stated that you want to be a good mother to your son. Being in jail keeps you from caring for him like a normal, loving mother. You also said that you don't want to be away from him ever again. Doing what you did to get re-arrested prolongs you from being with him. Keep in mind that it takes a lot of hard work and dedication to be an Obstetrician, but if it's out there, it's reachable.

Being A Mom

Being a mother is the hardest thing for me to do.
I'm raising an innocent child
so I have to start off new.

My baby boy is my life, my world, my everything.
He is my heart, my soul, my king.

Being a single mother is so frustrating.
Will he ever look up to me?

Will he judge me for my past?

Will his love for me forever last?

I want to show my son the love I've never had.

- Kimberly

From The Beat: You ask if he will look up to you, he probably won't if you continue to be locked-up. You ask if his love will last, it probably won't if you're absent from his life. You say you want to show him love, do so by not repeating the same mistakes that got you in here. Live your life right - if not for yourself, for your son.

Numerous Things I Must Do In My Life

There is only one thing that I want and must do in my life, now of course there are numerous thing in life that you must accomplish that are given. Such as building a career, a family, paying your bills, and so on. But there is one thing that I must do in my life.

I used to fight, cuss, and sometimes even hit my family members. I knew at the time that it wasn't right, and it's still not right to this day. It was getting so bad that I got kicked out of my house, and ended up living on the streets for five months. I was living with my friend's girlfriends, but mostly with the street.

I really did not know what I was in. Not knowing that my family really did love me. I did not think that they did, if they loved me so much then why did they kick me out? I thought, "Puck them", was my one thought in my mind.

After living on the streets for as long as I did I started to get lonely with no one to tell me that they loved me. My father could always find me. He knew all my friends and all my hang-out spots. He would get a hold of me, asking if I needed anything, food, money, whatever.

He always said "if you need anything just call me." That was "Love". But in my mind I did not want his or anybody else's help. I was on my own and I liked it that way, no one could tell me what to do, not even the cops at that point. I got in trouble with the police with some loitering, and I told them to screw-off and ran, never getting caught. I was getting away with so much, but getting so little in life. I was getting very tired of it.

One night, I was drinking and smoking, not the best two things in this world, but they were my world. I got to thinking real hard about my life, my friends, but mostly my family, and the things we did while we were growing up. Such as birthdays, holidays, waking up to Christmas together, riding bikes together, even eating dinner together. I missed all of that so so much, you, whoever is reading this, would never imagine how I felt.

So that night of heavy drinking, heavy smoking, and heavy thinking, I called my dad to see what it would take to be accepted by my family, back into their house.

Now during my run-away days I was also on the run from my probation, and had three felony warrants. There was only one way to take care of those problems and that was to turn myself in, and that's what my father told me to do. "Go and turn yourself in, start doing the right thing in life".

I thought hard for a day or two to see if I really wanted to turn myself in. I knew that I would have to go to the D-home at some point to resolve this. I wanted to just be with my family, and in order to do that I had to turn myself in. I thought of it as if I wanted to go back to my family I had to sacrifice my freedom for a while. I agreed to it, I turned myself in and now I'm sitting in jail writing this story. I really think doing this changed my life, or my look on life, what's more important, and what not.

If there's one thing I want to accomplish in my life is to always have people that will love me forever, even after seeing me through my worst times in my life. My family is what really counts in my life and its what I want to accomplish. The end.

- Tim

From The Beat: You asked, "if they love me so much, why did they kick me out?" Logically, family members don't want to fight, be cussed at, nor be hit by their son. Feeling sorry for yourself doesn't make it right either. But you know what's important - your family. It's easy to go back to bad habits but it takes a real man to endure the hardships to lead a straight path. You hurt your family before, now is the time to make it right.

Todo Saldrá Bien Con Dios

La forma como quiero cambiar mi vida es escoger el camino de Dios, estar con mi madre y obedecerla a ella y a mi padre, pero hay cosas que hacemos sin saber que van a traer consecuencias. Dejame decirle a las personas que estan en la cárcel que la vida sigue y que si siempre estas con Dios. Hagas cosas malas, Dios siempre los guía. Si le pedimos a él aunque sea un poquito de esperanza, con la fe en Dios, siempre todo te va a salir bien.

From The Beat: Que bien que estes empezando a cambiar tu vida con algo bueno y positivo. Esperamos que la palabra de Dios y con la fe que le tienes, te ayuden a ser una persona diferente. Siempre recuerda a donde te lleban los malos pasos. ¿Qué más haras para cambiar tu vida?

Everything Will Be OK

The way I want to change my life is by finding the road of God, being with my mother, listen to her and my dad. There are thing we do without thinking that bring consequences. Let me tell the people who are in jail, after here, life continues and that you are always with God. Even if you do wrong, God is always guide you. If we ask him a little of hope, with faith, everything will be fine.

-Douglas, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's sounds good that you are starting to change your life with something good and positive. We hope God's words and the faith you have in Him help you become a different person. Always keep in mind where bad steps can take you to. What else are you willing to do to change?

RIP Mi Madre

Yo les quiero contar que cuando se le muere alguien querido se siente mal. Cuando se le muere un hermano a un amigo, hay muchos que se tatuan el nombre para andarlo vivo. Se sienten mejor en tatuarse el RIP.

Siento que cuando a uno le pasa eso, es como si se quisieran morir y aveces hasta uno quiere dar la vida por la que muere.

Yo me senti muy mal cuando se me murió mi madre. Me senti tan mal como si se me hubiera salido el alma. Me puse muy pensativo. No estube con ella por mucho tiempo y cuando se murió no estaba con ella. No la había visto por 10 años. Sufri por dentro de mi alma. Dios que me perdone.

From The Beat: Sentimos mucho tu pérdida. Todos sufrimos cuando alguien se nos muere. ¿Crees que el no haber estado con tu madre, hizo que cometieras muchos errores en la vida? Sea donde ella esté, estamos seguro que desea que salgas de los caminos malos en el cual te encuentras. Lucha por salir adelante y recuerda que ella siempre estará en tu corazón. No te dejes vencer. Recuerda que la vida sigue.

RIP My Mother

When someone you love dies, it hurt so much. When a brother of any of my friends dies, they tattooed his name to keep him alive. It makes them feel better.

I feel that when something like this happens, it feel so terrible that makes you want to die or give your life for the dead person.

I felt bad when my mother died. I felt so bad as if my soul separated from my body. I was very quiet and I was thinking a lot. I wasn't with her for long and when she died I wasn't there either. I didn't see her for ten years. I suffered from my soul so much. God forgives me.

-Elvin, Alameda

From The Beat: We are so sorry for your loss. We all suffer when someone dies in our lives. Do you think not being around your mother affected the way you are and made you commit many mistakes? Wherever she is, we are sure that she wishes you to stay away from those roads you are currently walking by. Fight to succeed and remember that she will always be in your heart. Don't give up. Life continues!

Comprar Mi Casa

Una de las cosas que quiero hacer en mi vida es adquirir una casa propia. Para cumplir eso, tengo que aprender a ser responsable. Comprar una casa no es algo facil. Debo tener mucha paciencia para lograr mi meta en la vida.

Indifinitivamente lo que yo escogiera sería mi propia casa para vivir en ella, ya que ella es lo que anelo. Para mí, pensar en una casa es la mejor propuesta que me puedo proponer.

From The Beat: Esa meta es una grande. Recuerda que todo es posible cuando los deseos son grande en nuestros corazones. Te recomendamos que para hacerte la vida más facil y poder obtener lo que quieres deberias de buscar un buen trabajo y para eso necesitas un buen estudio. El estudio abre muchas puertas y facilita la vida a las personas. Que no se te olvide eso.

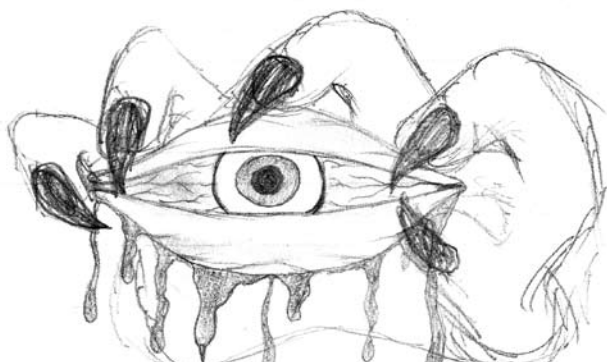
To Buy A House

One of the things I want to do in my life is to get my own house. To make this possible, I have to learn to become responsible. To buy a house is nothing easy. I have to have a lot of patience to make my dreams a reality.

I would definitely choose my house to live in it, giving the fact that that's what I want. For me, to think about a house is the best choice I can propose to myself.

-Josue, San Francisco

From The Beat: That's a good goal. We hope you make it happen. Remember that everything is possible when the desires are huge in our hearts. We recommend you to get a good education to get a job that can help you achieve your dream. Education open many doors and it makes life easier. Don't forget that.



Me Asusta Volver Aqui

Me asusta volver a este lugar. Ya quiero alejarme de las calles ya que no me trae nada bueno. He estado apunto a que me mataran varias veces. Sinceramente se siente bien feo que la muerte lo visite a uno.

From The Beat: Te has dado cuenta de lo has dicho. En pocas palabras, nos estas diciendo que la vida te ha dado varias oportunidades de vida. ¿Qué más quieres? ¿Qué esperas que pase en tu vida para que agarres el punto? Ten cuidado que pueda que no hay una última.

It Scares Me To Come Back Here

It scares me to come back to this place. I want to stay away from the streets giving the reason that it doesn't bring anything good to me. I've been very close to get killed a few times. Honestly, it feels really terrible to have death close to you.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Have you realized what you have shared with us? In few words, you are telling us that life has giving you "a few" changes to keep your life. What else are you expecting? What are you expecting to happen to you to get the point? Be careful with the next time, there may not be another chance.

La Calle Es La Perdición

La calle es algo que te lleba a la perdición porque en la calle uno se lleba con amigos malos.

Quiero que cuando salga no volver aqui porque estando aqui no sabes que hacer encerrado en tu cuarto. Por eso le pido a Dios que me ayude a no volver aqui. Ojalá que me ayude a buscar trabajo para ayudar a mi familia.

Uno se viene de su pais para ayudarle a su familia y uno sufre mucho para llegar aqui a los Estados Unidos. No quiero volver a caer aqui porque le quiero a ayudar a mi familia.

From The Beat: Entonces ya sabes a lo que te lleba a la perdición. ¿Ahora ya sabes lo que puede mantener alejado de eso? Si te llegan a dar otra oportunidad para que trabajes en esta pais, usala bien. Es bien difícil venir aqui para nada. Hay gente que dependen de tus decisiones y acciones. Piensa con la cabeza!

The Streets Is Perdition

The street is something that guides you to perdition because there is where you find bad friends.

I don't want to come back here when I get out because while being in here you don't know what to do in your room. That's why I'm asking God to help me stay out. I hope He helps me find a job, so I can help my family.

We come to this country to help our families and we suffer so much to get to the US. I don't want to end up here because I want to help my family.

-Marlos, San Francisco
From The Beat: Now you know what takes you to perdition. Do you know what can keep you away from it? If they give you another chance to work in this country, take advantage of it. It's hard to come here for nothing. There are people who depend on your decisions and choices.

Recuerdos Malos

What's up vatos ustedes saben quien es este vato. Me recuerdo en los años pasados, viviendo la vida descontrolada. Pues una vez estabamos yo y mis homies nos estabamos corriendonos de la placa y chocamos. Me abri la cabeza y me fuí al hospital. Cuando desperté todo me parecía una sueño que no sabía lo que había pasado.

Tampoco supe del dolor que le causaba a mi familia. Tampoco entendi porque estoy hoy aqui laquiado, cumpliendo una condena.

Hasta al rato.

From The Beat: Piensa bien y analiza la razón por la cual estas aqui y te das cuenta el porque estas aqui. No trates de ocultar la verdad. Date cuenta de la realidad. Ya es tiempo! ¿Una cosa más, te has dado cuantas personas han muerto en accidentes como esos? Tú pudistes haber sido uno.

Bad Memories

What's up, you know who this is. I remember my past years, when I was living an uncontrollable life. One time homies and I were running away from the police and we crashed. I cracked my head open and I went to the hospital. When I woke up, everything seemed to be a dream and I didn't know what had happened.

I also wasn't aware of the harm I was causing my family. I also don't know why I'm here locked up, paying off a sentence.

-Vampiro, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Think hard and analyze by yourself the reason why you are here and you will find out the answer. Stop denying the truth. Accept the reality. One more thing, have you realized how many people had lost their lives over car accidents? You could have been one.

Desesperada

Mi padre nunca supo amarme
Cada vez que yo quería asercarme
Yo siempre estuve desesperada

Lo único que quiero es ser amada

Me la paso triste todo el día

Hay mucho dolor en este corazón mío

Lo que más quiero es un amable padre

Pero ya lo perdí, es demaciado tarde.

From The Beat: Nunca es demaciado tarde a menos que tú padre ya no siga con nosotros en este mundo. ¿Estas segura que has hecho lo posible para llevarte bien con él? ¿Que tanto ha sido tu efuerzo?

Desperate

My dad never learned to love me

Every time I wanted to get near by

I was always desperate

All I ever wanted was to be loved

I spend all day sad

There is a lot of sadness inside this heart of mine

What I really want is a lovely father

But I lost him, it's too late.

-No Name, Marin

From The Beat: It's never too late unless your father is no longer with us in this world. Are you sure you have done everything that is in your reach to keep a good relationship with your father? How big has your effort been?

*I'm asking God to
help me stay out...*

Perdí A Mi Madre

What's up? This is Vampiro from San Jose. Perdí a mi mama cuando tenía 5 años de edad. No me acuerdo muy bien de ella, pero siempre está en mi mente. A su honor, me tatue si nombre en mi pecho. Trato de no acordarme tanto de ella porque me aguito.

Trato de cambiar para que ella esté feliz donde sea que esté y no esté triste por las cosas que hago. Saldre de aqui y hare cosas mejores.

From The Beat: Tú no eres el único que ha perdido a una persona especial en la vida. Todos vamos a dejar este mundo queramos y no queramos. Creemos que deberias de luchar por corregir los errores que te estan pasando. Aunque ya no tengas a tu madre viva, tienes a tu propia vida. O sea que deberias de pensar en eso antes que sea tarde. ¡Siempre recuérdalo!

I Lost My Mother

What's up? This is Vampiro from San Jose. I lost my mom when I was five years old. I don't remember her very well, but she's always in my mind. In her honor, I tattooed her name on my chest. I try not to remember her because I get sad.

I try to change, so she can be happy wherever she is and don't be sad for the things I do. I'll get out of here and I'll try to be better.

-Vampiro Santa Clara

From The Beat: You are the only one who has lost a special woman in life. We are going to leave this world like it or not. We suggest you to fight to correct your mistakes you've made in the past. Even if your mother is no longer with you, you have a life to live. So start thinking about before it's too late. Always remember that!

Lo Qué Más Amo

El ser que más amo es a mi familia. Yo tengo una niña y me da mucha tristeza saber que estoy lejos de mi familia.

Me hace falta toda mi familia y me da mucha tristeza que no los puedo ayudar porque estar encerrado y desesperación. Quiero ver a mi familia y me hace mucha falta hablar con ellos.

From The Beat: Entonces debería de comenzar de portarte como lo que eres, el hombre de la familia. Hay mucha gente que cuentan contigo, tu hija por ejemplo. Ellos necesitan de tu ayuda no de la pérdida de tiempo que tienes.

What I Love Most

The thing I love the most is my family. I have a babe and it make me sad to know that I am far away from my family.

I miss my whole family and it makes me sad that I can't help them because I am locked up and desperate. I want to see my family and I miss talking to them.

-Marlon, San Francisco

From The Beat: Maybe you should start behaving well for the person you are, the man of the family. There are a lot of people who depend on you. Your daughter is an example. They need your help not to waste their time.

Es El Perro

El animal que más me gusta es el perro porque el perro que yo tenía era muy inteligente. El me entendía lo que yo le decía. Cuando yo le silbaba para llamarlo, él hacía caso. Lo malo es que él no habla. Si hablara quizás fuera como las personas porque entienden todo hasta cuando lo regañan.

Cuando tenía hambre nomas me chillaba y me jalaba el pantalón y me jalaba hacia la taza donde él comía.

From The Beat: ¿Todavía lo tienes? Te debe extrañar mucho. ¿No Crees? Gracias por tu tiempo.

It's The Dog

The animal I like the most is the dog because the one I had was very intelligent. He would understand what I would tell him. When I whistle at him, he would listen. The bad thing is that he doesn't talk. If he did, he would probably be like people because they can understand it all.

When he was hungry, he would cry, would grab me from my pants and guide me to his bowl.

-Ever, San Francisco

From The Beat: Do you still have this dog? If so, he must be missing you.

A Dios Le Pido

Yo le pido a Dios con todo mi corazón que me ayude a salir de aqui porque Dios es el único que nos puede ayudar. Yo tengo fe en Dios que pronto saldre de aqui.

From The Beat: ¿Si Dios te ayuda a salir, cuales seran los planes en tu vida? ¿Los has pensado? ¿Volveras?

I Ask God

I ask God with all my heart to help me get out of here because God is the only one that can help me. I have faith in God that I will get out soon.

-Henri, Marin

From The Beat: If God helps you get out, what are your plans in life? Have you thought about it? Are you coming back?



El Año Pasado

El año pasado me la pasé muy contento con mi familia. Fue el año que me la pase contento porque estaba con mi familia y todos mis seres queridos.

Como quisiera regresar el tiempo atras pero no puedo hacerlo. Creo que este año la voy a pasar con ellos y ella. Confío en Dios que salga pronto.

From The Beat: Eso esperamos que te la pases al lado de tu familia. Tal vez no puedas regresar el pasado, pero si podrias volver a experimentar los mismos momentos que pasastes antes con tu seres queridos. "El poder es el querer."

Last Year

Last year I spent it happy with my family. It was the year I happily spent with my family and loved ones.

How I wish to turn back time, but I can't do it. In this year, I think I'm going to spend it with them and her. I have faith in God that I'll get out soon.

-Rodrigo, Santa Clara

From The Beat: That's what we hope so as well. You may not be able to turn back time, but we are sure that you can experience those moments and even better when you get out with those you love. "When there's a will, there's a way."

La Solución

Cuando tengo temor pienso que ponerse triste no es la solución. Yo busco la manera como continuar alegre porque sé que algún día esto pasara. Sé que algunas veces nos pasan cosas que no podemos resistir y nos ponemos a pensar cosas que no debemos mas que en la maldad. Si alguien te hace mal, tú piensas desquitartela, pero no es la solución. Te lo aseguro.

From The Beat: ¿Fue eso lo que te pasó a ti? ¿Te dejastes ganar de la maldad? ¿Cual es la solución cuando alguien te hace daño?

The Solution

When I feel fear, I think that getting sad is not the solution. I look for ways to keep myself happy because I know that some day it will pass. Sometimes, things go wrong for us, things that we can't resist and we start thinking about doing bad things. If someone does something bad to you, you always think about revenge, but that isn't the solution. I bet you that.

-Marlon, San Francisco

From The Beat: Is that what happened to you? Were you controlled by badness? What's the best solution to deal with when someone treats you bad?

One Sweet Solemn Thought

One sweet solemn thought
 Comes to me o'er and o'er
 I'm nearer home today;
 Than I have been before.

Nearer my Father's house
 Where many mansions be,
 Nearer the great white throne
 Nearer the Crystal Sea.

Nearer the bound of life
 Where burdens are laid down;
 Nearer leaving the cross,
 Nearer gaining the crown.

The New Year is finally here, but some things rightfully never change. In the confines of dark and lonely prison cells, Christ probably couldn't be more ever-present than when suffering such a pain as incarceration. And this next writer, who's writing from the Crossroads Correctional Center in Cameron, Missouri has definitely found God. For those of us who do believe in Jesus, or in any other form of God, this will definitely be a writer that hits home for you. And for those of us who don't believe in a higher power, you can still learn a tremendous amount from this incredible person who makes it clear that all he wants to do from now on is give back to his brothers and sisters. And we definitely aren't going to argue with that, for whether you believe in God or not, one thing is universal and that part of our purpose in life is to give back to our fellow man/woman. We appreciate all of his insights and we're very sure this isn't the last we'll hear from this amazing mind. Thank you for being all that you are and we look forward to your next installment of writing.

'Twas The Night Before Jesus Came

'Twas the night before Jesus came, and all through the house,
 Not a creature was praying, not one in the house.
 Their Bibles were lain on the shelf without care,
 In hopes that Jesus would not come there.

The children were dressing to crawl into bed,
 Not once ever kneeling or bowing a head.
 And mom's in her rocker with the baby on her lap,
 Was watching the Late Show while I took a nap.

When out of the East there arose such a clatter,
 I sprang to my feet to see what was the matter.
 Away to the windows I flew like a flash,
 Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash!

When what to my wondering eyes should appear,
 But angels proclaiming that Jesus was here.
 With a light like the sun sending forth a bright ray,
 I knew in a moment this must be THE DAY!

The light of His face made me cover my head,
 It was Jesus returning just like He had said.
 And though I possessed worldly wisdom and wealth,
 I cried when I saw Him in spite of myself.

In the Book of Life which He held in His hand,
 Was written the names of every saved man.
 He spoke not a word as He searched for my name,
 When He said, "It's not here" my head hung in shame.

The people whose names had been written with love,
 He gathered to take to His Father above.
 With those who were ready He rose without a sound,
 While all the rest were left standing around.

I'd fell to my knees, but it was too late,
 I had waited too long and thus sealed my fate.
 I stood and I cried as they rose out of sight,
 Oh, if only I had been ready tonight.

In the words of this poem the meaning is clear,
 The coming of Jesus friend is drawing near.
 There's only one life and when comes the last call,
 We'll find that the Bible was true after all!

Two Cripples

Two cripples entered a church one day;
 Crippled but each in a different way;
 One had a body strong and whole,
 But it sheltered a warped and twisted soul.
 The other walked with a halting gait
 But his soul was "tall and fair and straight."
 They shared a pew. They shared a book;
 But on each face was a different look:

One was alight with hope and joy
 And faith that nothing could destroy.
 The other joined not in prayer of hymn,
 No smile relaxed his features grim.

His neighbor had wronged him: his heart was sore,
 He thought of himself and nothing more.
 The words that were read from the Holy Book
 Struck deafened ears and a forlorn look.
 To one came comfort, his soul was fed;
 The other gained nothing from what was said.
 Two cripples left the church that day;
 Crippled, but each in a different way;
 A twisted foot did one body mar,
 But the twisted soul was sadder far.

The Claim Of Victory

In my trying times of life dear friend
 I can cry, "Oh woe is me!"

Or I can set my eyes toward Jesus
 And claim the victory.

It might not come tomorrow friend
 And in might not come next week,
 But the Bible says that answers come
 To those who diligently seek.

And, if I look around me here in prison
 And realize others' pain,

My burden seems much lighter friend
 And much hope I quickly gain.

So, although the trials of life my friend
 Can discourage and depress,

Oh let me reassure you,

Jesus will come and give you rest.

For when I reach the point

When I feel I can't take anymore,

He arrives to bring me comfort friend
 With the answers I've prayed for.

Much adoration I have gained

Thru years of "troubled days"

By understanding that by my side dear friend
 My Savior Jesus always stays.

Glory's Waiting I Am Going

Glory's waiting to receive me,
Just beyond the sunset's glow;
And I'm longing, even praying
That I'll soon be called to go.

I expect my Lord to come soon,
So I watch and wait each day
While I point the loss to Jesus
Help them to the heav'nly way.

I can fancy I see heaven,
See the golden gates open wide;
And it seems that they do beckon
All God's loved ones to His side,

I will gladly answer Jesus
When at last He calls me home;
I will be with Him forever,
From His side I'll never roam.

I have made sure that I'm ready;
"Jesus, come; appear right now."
I will watch the many millions
As to Christ they humbly bow.

Even not I see the splendor,
But it's really not complete.
I am only seeing darkly
'Till my Savior I shall meet.

One by one the Lord is calling
Others home to be so blest;
I just know they are so happy
In that land of joy and rest.

There I'll sing great songs of gladness,
And I'll praise my King for aye;
I will be with Him forever,
Spend with Him an endless day.

Time

The days I have done
Are lessoned now by one;
Dark shades are falling
How unperceived they slide
And ever-onward glide
Beyond recalling.

The morning scarcely past,
Dark night is gathering fast,
Already o'er us.
Who can impede the course?
Who trade th' eternal source
Of time that bore us?

Unstable Mind

There is bone-chilling numbness where my heart used
to be

And chaotic thoughts in my mind create lunacy
Soul-shattering screams and vivid nightmares
Hypnotic eyes with a thousand-yard stare
A beast now dwells where a man once resided
Yet the fate of my spirit is still undecided
One-track mind; I relinquished all choices
How do I respond to these many faceless voices?
Because of terror-stricken visions of long ago years
I erase my memories, thus, no more tears
Hours pass by in a tranquil daze
I feel no remorse for my demented ways
Psychotic ideas become grand vision instead
And bring reality to all the destruction in my head
Play acting, casting, it all seems the same to me
Dazed, confused, and embraced by insanity

Remember Me

Prison's no place for an innocent child,
There's no room for the meek, no room for the mild.
The nights are so lonely I toss in my bed,
The days are so weary I face them with dread.

Grant me one prayer as you did from the cross,
For that thief who knew that his life was a loss,
Please come back to this prison where I sit alone,
Surrounded by walls, guard towers and stone.

Broken and weeping, forgotten and lost,
On the ash heap of regret where my life was tossed.
I've no other place left on this Earth,
Remember me, oh lord! Renew me, by birth.

Please come to the prison, and enter my cell,
Save me, forgive me, rescue me, from this man-made
hell.

And if in this life, no home here I see,
In your kingdom of forgiveness, Jesus please remember
me!

Photograph

Staring into her eyes
Seeing her cute little smile
Appreciating the exquisite being
Of my beautiful adopted little Vietcong child
Hearing the melody of her laughter
Just an innocent little laugh
Hoping she knows how much I loved her
As I sit her across the ocean in prison
Staring at her photograph

From birth until now, she's grown so much
I remember clearly when I held her last
Now looking back at the sweet memory
I can see that years are going by too fast

I'd saved the pictures she'd scribbled for me
It's artwork I truly adore
I know that my letters were never enough
I just wish I could have given her so much more
Reminiscing about the short time in Vietnam I was with
her

Bittersweet memories are now all that I have
Each night I give her a hug and a kiss
Just one of a million on the face of her photograph

In memory of a little child whom was a victim of the
killing fields she was tortured to death in Vietnam.

Attention! Wake Up Call Gangster's And Prankster's

He was innocent but taken away in iron shackles. He received no juvenile, probation, pardon, or DNA exoneration. He was executed in the manner of the day: an extremely painful, torturous, agonizingly slow death, beaten close to death and nailed to a cross between two thieves.

He said, "I'll be back," and meant it. From the dead, He arose three days later.

Jesus knows about doing time. You think you know about suffering?

He's been there, done that. Jesus is a stand up guy, He's everybody's homeboy. And if you need some help doing your time hard time, He's available.

There's an old joke about "I found Jesus." The jokes response is, "I didn't know He was lost." Well, the joke ends there.

Friend when you go to juvenile, jail or prison, Jesus sees an opportunity to get your attention, to set you aside for a while to consider your ways and to try and get your head on straight.

There was a purpose for my coming to prison as a lot of prisoners will tell you. I would already be dead if it weren't for my being in prison. Maybe even you if you hadn't ended up in juvie. Please let your time there be a WAKE-UP-CALL for you, let it be an experience you can learn from, don't let your anger and hurt blind you from trying to get your life in order.

We're not the only ones we got locked up, we locked up our families to their in a prison of misery, pain and loneliness. If you're not concerned for yourself than at least be concerned for your loved ones. You ain't no good to your families where you are and you won't be any good to them in prison or in an early grave.

Through a new beginning in Christ Jesus you can change your values, change your life patterns your friends and learn to live a full and meaningful life, someone your family can be proud of and look up to.

It's not about sex, drugs, big money, crime or gangs they only lead to three places lock-up, a grave, and hell. It's about Jesus and serving others and love. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Don't be a fool like me, I've been in prison since 1973 and had been in juvie four times also, and in more jails than I care to count. It's about being free little sisters and little bros, if you ain't learned yet, you will when you get to the big top "PRISON!" if you don't end up dying in the streets.

Prison really ain't no joke, I've been butchered, piped, and gang beaten and raped, you're in paradise compared to this. I'm locked down twenty-three hours a day, I get a five minute shower three days a week and three 45-minute exercise times locked in a cage like a dog Kennel out doors in full restraints. These places are full of phonies, fake people, whom claim to know everything, claim to have all the answers, if they know so much why are they locked up with us? Think about that!

We can live a genuine Christian life behind juvie, jail or prison walls, and it begins with getting to know God in a very personal and honest way.

As raunchy and despicable as our crimes and sins may be, if we have turned to Christ Jesus for forgiveness and salvation friends, then we are now purified through Him. Anybody, anywhere, anytime, can now connect with God because of Jesus' death and resurrection.

He loves you and juveniles provide chaplains and chapels services that can help open your eyes to what the Bible means and all that God can do in your life. But no matter where you are you can open up the Bible and privately discover some of God's amazing truth for your life. And you don't have to be in a church or the chapel to pray.

Come to think about it, some of the strongest Christians I met in juvie and prison seldom were in the chapel except on Sunday morning. They read their Bibles, prayed, and gently ministered to others elsewhere within these lock-up joints. They were honest in their relationships with God and willing to share with others. And when they went home, they didn't come back. Instead, they returned to their loved ones and took care of their

responsibilities and the unfinished business in life. Wish I had... Try to find a group of like minded brothers or sisters to have Bible study with, for survival in or out of juvie or prison is finding a community of like minded folks, especially ones who share a Christian faith and world view. Hollywood movies love to glorify the tough loner who doesn't need anyone. But for those of us living in the real life, you gotta have friends. So get active in church programs and read your Bible regularly, seeking to apply its words and teaching to your own life and relationships. Along the way, you will get ready for life on the outside.

We are all in this messed up situation together, no matter our crimes or sins, or the abuse we might have experienced in our lives, or how criminally tough we want to seem to our fellow residents or inmates. Juvenile like prison is another type of school — that is, a chance to learn something. If we can learn how to live with God in these places, then there's a good chance we can also do it out in Freedomville, where we can enjoy a great abundance of churches, pastors, and enthusiastic mentors. And Jesus Christ can and should be the centerpiece in learning a new lifestyle based on love and respect for others — those who believe and for those who don't, for Jesus brought with Him a new idea to live by — love. To paraphrase the Great Commandment from Matthew 22:36-40: "Love the lord as much as we can and love one another as if it were God in our neighbor's or others shoes."

When we each walk together as fellow Christians with love and respect for each other, we are strengthened and encouraged in Christian living and values; We all must make a decision while we're still alive and able to. Walls and wire nor anyone else cannot keep God out of your life — only you can do that. It takes a real person to be a Christian!

Please give Jesus a try, you've tried everything else that didn't work out for you, now give Jesus a chance my young friend...

Decision Time?

Have you asked for the forgiveness of sins that grants you eternal life with Jesus Christ? If you realize you are a sinner and have never asked for God's forgiveness and cleansing in this way before, do it now. Friend! God sent His Son Jesus to pay the penalty for your sins. Your salvation cost Him His life. For you sis and bro, it's free.

You can use words something like this:

"Dear heavenly Father God, I know I am a sinner and I am sorry for my sins. I want to ask for your forgiveness. I accept the forgiveness, which was bought by the blood of your Son Jesus Christ, who paid the full penalty for my sins. Please come into my heart and cleanse it. I want to start over — brand new. Thank you, Lord. Amen."

If you've sincerely prayed this prayer, God's Spirit has now entered your life and will become your constant companion. He has promised to "never leave you nor for sale you" even if you lose heart along the way. During your most difficult times, He'll be working in you, strengthening and encouraging you. When you get out, take Him with you; it is tough on the outside and you'll each need all the help you can get.

If you got any questions or need a friend you can write to me and I'll assist you however I can, and find others that will also!! Your friend and brother in Jesus!

P.S. I'll be a big brother or a dad or a friend to you if you need me too, in reality we are all family and need to realize it and stop hurting and hating on each other. Do what the staff at Juvie tell you to do like it or not stay out of trouble so you can get out and back to your family those of you with pending cases especially have to stay out of trouble in Juvie because it will reflect upon your case at sentencing.

Prison ain't nothing nice it's every bad thing you heard about it only 10-times worse. Good luck to you because without Jesus in your heart your gonna need a lot of luck. I'm only trying to keep it real with you!

I pray this article will help motivate those children in Juvenile's and anyone else that reads it. You can print it up in your newsletter or just make a separate pamphlet with this article in it.

The Plan

Abandoned Savior
Bruised and beaten
Stumbling on the cobblestone
Weighted with the cross of Calvary
In a crowd, yet all alone.

Abused Savior
Dresses I satire
Thorns like talons pierce your bloody brow
Closest comrades those you've trusted
Now your friendships disavow.

Loving Savior
Full of mercy
Suffering for the human race
Patient, kind, forgiving master
I embrace your gift of grace

Lifeless Savior
Pain has ended
Head lays pendant upon your chest
Hands that once healed, lay mutilated
You, for me, endured this test

Living Savior
You have risen
Death is swallowed in defeat
Battle fought, triumphant victory
Sin is conquered, his plan complete

In The Face Of A Thief

A couple of years ago I entered these prisons
Where I looked upon anger and strife
But a message I'd learned from a prisoner here
I'll remember the rest of my life

The prisoner said he was contented
In paying back society's due.
"It's easy to render to Caesar," he said
"When you have the Master with you"

Oh, I've seen his anger fly out of hand
For he was just human you see
Then asked both offended and God to forgive
Unashamed when bending his knee

It's been many long years since I
Had the faith that this prisoner has shown
And although he was only with me a short while
His message had pointed me home.

Yes, a few years ago I entered these prisons
Where I looked with disbelief
Upon the face of my Savior Lord Jesus
Worn on the face of a thief!

Wandering Away

As the sun comes up I lie awake in this iron bed,
Trying so hard to fight these painful thoughts in my head.

It's been thirty-three years since the day I went away,
And they say it will be one year more until I come home to stay.

As I try to stay focused and tend to the task at hand,
Suddenly I realize I'm merely a man.
A man weak, alone and so frail

And still having trouble getting used to this prison cell.
I swear I'm innocent but then again that's what we all say,

As they shut the door on the life of crime we chose to play.

As 11:00 p.m. rolls around and they turn the cell lights down low,

I'm crying for help but don't know to whom I should go.
When suddenly a thought flashes through my mind,
Of me as a child kneeling to pray as I did once upon a time.

At that very moment I threw back the covers and
climbed out of this iron bed,
And hit my naked knees to the concrete floor and bowed my head.

As I stretched my pleading hands to Heaven I felt tears rolling down my face,
As I'd thought of all the bad things I'd done that got me locked into this place.

How did I wander so far from you Jesus I asked in a low voice,

God said, "I was always here for you Son but you wandered astray by choice."

From this day forth my God, my life is Yours to keep,
And for the first time in my prison cell I found love and peace,

And sleep, knowing my soul was God's to keep!

*It's been many long years since I
Had the faith that this prisoner has shown
And although he was only with me
a short while
His message had pointed me home.*

Never Alone

I'm never alone in the morning
As I rise at the break of day,
For Jesus who watched through the darkness
Says, "Lo, I am with you always"

I'm never alone in my prison cell
Though loved ones no longer see
For dearer than all who have vanished
Is Jesus who breaks bread with me.

I'm never alone in this prison
Though nothing but trials I see
Though the furnace be seven times heated
The "form of the fourth" walks with me

I'm never alone at the twilight
When darkness around me doth creep
And specters press hard round my pillow
He watches and cares while I sleep

I'm walking and talking with Jesus
Each day in prison as I travel along
I'm never alone. Hallelujah!
The joy of the lord is my song.

I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

(Our) Class Dismissed

Prisoncrats enforce their rules
 With pure corruption
 Trained in the game of mass abuse
 And pride reduction
 The shaded eyes of the public mass
 Are ignorant to our rights
 Because the jaded lies of prisoncrats
 Keep the truth far from their sight
 We're classified as "lower-class"
 And treated worse than cattle
 Laws are made and bills are passed
 To ensure that we lose this battle
 "Tough on crime-look 'em up!"
 Are the only goals they mention
 Selling society false security
 To lock-in their re-election
 To write as one amongst our kind
 Is a punishable offense
 Locked in a cage, can't vent our rage
 The situation's tense
 Verbal abuse and physical bruises
 Society don't give them a glance,
 But then they wonder why we'll riot and die
 If we ever get a chance
 A rich man fleeces millions
 And gets a few months on probation
 While a young boy homeless on the streets
 Gets a life of condemnation
 Mr. Money Bags has the best attorneys
 That money could ever get
 While the lower-class gets public pretenders
 Who truly don't give a shhh
 From coast to coast, they're building more prisons
 At record-setting speed
 Exploiting inmate labor
 Just to satisfy their greed
 Something has to give
 Yet there seems no hope in sight
 But the only way we'll persevere
 Is to stay loyal, stand up, and fight

*Sometimes the way I cannot see
 But father's hand still leadeth me*

Freedom's Crown

Could I ever be the moonlight,
 Or dance amongst the stars...
 Could I ever be so free in life,
 Even here behind these iron bars?

Freedom's quite elusive,
 Though too few can understand...
 How simply it can come along,
 Yet, so difficult, so grand.

It comes from deep within you,
 It's a gift you get from God...
 It matters not what cash you have,
 Nor the paths in life you've trod.

There are many forms so prisons pard,
 It's not just a place, you see...
 One's soul can be bound tightly in chains,
 Even when their body's free.

I am not over intelligent,
 I know so little how to explain...
 Except to say that with His love
 You can smile friend even in your pain.

Cages can never hold you in,
 And chains never hold you down...
 But your spirit can soar upon the wind,
 When you seek His thorny crown!

The Father's Hand

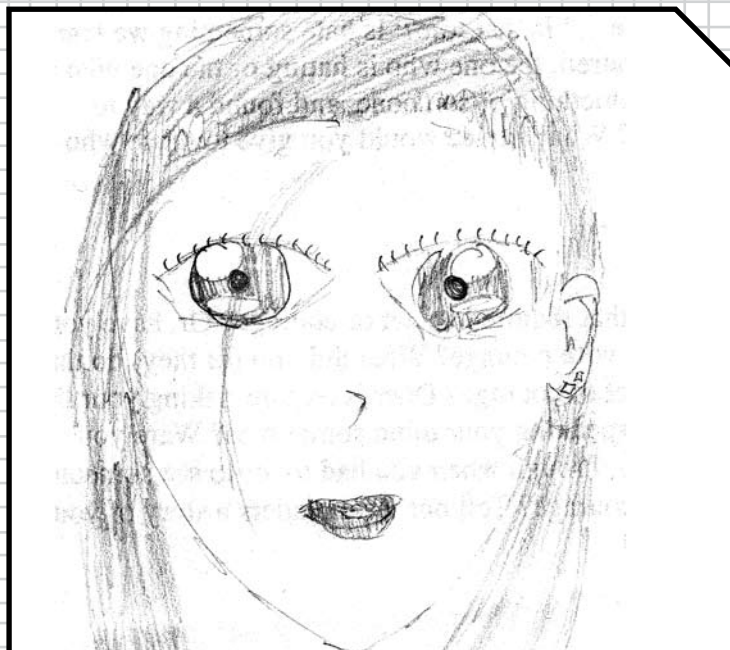
While through this changing world below
 I would not choose my path to go
 'Tis father's hand that leadeth me,
 Then o' how safe his child must be

Sometimes we walk in sunshine bright
 Sometimes in darkness of the night
 Sometimes the way I cannot see
 But father's hand still leadeth me

Sometimes there seems no way to take
 But father's hand a way doth make
 Sometimes I hear him gently say
 "Come, follow me, this is the way"

Why should I mind the way I go?
 His way is best for me, I know
 He is my strength, my truth, and my way
 He is my comfort, rod and stay

So on we travel hand in hand
 Bound for the heavenly promised land
 Always friend, through all eternity
 I'll praise his name for leading me



TBW (The Beat Within)

When I first fell on this beef twenty-years ago the mindset of that time in the hood was to act like, dress like and be like our brothers coming out of the joint. Stand tall, be proud and don't ever let anyone disrespect you or yours. This I knew and understood but with it came a heavy price to be paid on demand, to show your heart no matter the cost. But even so this I understood as well.

Now days I cant even begin to understand the mindset and it took me awhile to realize that there isn't one anymore. What prevails now is a state of confusion, meth induced craziness and everything in between. And sadly society is still trying to battle this with long-term incarceration without rehabilitation.

In your editorial you asked what could be done to stop this madness? Well my friends it seems to me we are doing it to some extent in trying to reach out to our troubled and at risk youth. In showing them how to express their pain and confusion in writing and letting them know someone cares about them and wants to see them succeed in life. But we know much more needs to be done and until the stated and federal powers that be recognize that you cannot battle a sickness with punishment we are not going to be able to give these at risk youth the tools they need. Sure we can change their mind set while their incarcerated and I'm there with you trying to do just that but that's only the beginning, as we all know al to well. These young people need follow up care in the way of drug treatment, education, safe and healthy environments and lots of love and respect to build up their self worth. I hear over and over it needs to start in the home but I don't think they realize most of these youths done have a home to even go back to and 90% of those that do are better off away from them where they had been neglected, beaten or sexually abused. In short they need people in their lives that will not give up on them and will give them the love, understanding and support they deserve. I for one will never give up and if I can just reach even one through my writing them I'm on the right page for once in my life, and so are those of you trying to do the same.

This next writer is definitely about love and not hate. He first writes in a letter to us that he thinks guns are our problem and then he also sends us three poems about love. He's been writing for us for a very long time and we really enjoy it. He's been deemed a Beat veteran. In fact, he talks about how it was for him 20 years ago in the hood. The equivalent to revering someone for going to college in upper class neighborhoods, more poverty stricken neighborhoods revere people who've been to jail. As a matter of fact, they revere them to the point of emulation. He's writing from the Washington State Department of Corrections Facility in Walla Walla, Washington. We will close this BWO section with a bang thanks to the thoughts that are coming out of this next writer's head. Thank you for what you've shared...

Guns are not the problem, it's the mindset that showed them how to pick up that gun and use it. I don't have all the answers, none of us do but I do know the power in solidarity and as long as we all stand together in saving our young people we will do just that. It might only be a couple here and there for now but someday it will be all of them, and in doing so we save ourselves as well.

Well TBW, I finally landed in the SHU about a week ago and am getting settled in. I'm not to happy about doing another year program just because I have a STG (Security Threat Group) file but we live with the choices we make regardless of how stupid or long ago they were. There's only one way off the STG files and that's to debrief and I wont do it. It seems like time is nothing more then sitting in the SHU for years on end anymore. I'm good though as I will always be.

Thanks once again for the encouraging words and invite to keep submitting my work. I will do just hat as it feels good to give of myself for a change instead of taking for myself. I'm enclosing three more poems along the line of love found, love lost and the frustration of long distant love. Even relationships that do last are very had on both to maintain.

All right my friend thank you once again. Take good care, be safe and keep up the good work.

In struggle...

I Know You

Maybe I knew you from days of old,
 Somewhere along the misty shores,
 Where magic and mystical spirits ruled,
 Maybe that where I knew you?

Or could it of been somewhere in a dream,
 As I laid slumbering on the green?
 Or out upon a stormy sea,
 Searching for lands to see?

Maybe we were deities of ancient lore,

Who held the keys to loves door,
 Not allowing one heart bye,
 Unless for their love we knew they'd die?

Or could it of been just a few years ago,
 Flying hell bent down life's road,
 With you always at my side,
 Like a modern day Bonnie and Clyde?

It really matters not when or where,
 For my heart knew you were there,
 walking with me hand and hand,
 Seeking forever in the summer lands.

Awake At Night

It's had for me to tell you,
 The thoughts that fill my head,
 As I lay awake at night,
 Alone upon my bed.

How do I tell you,
 That without you I would die,
 How do I make you feel me,
 As I reach across the sky?

The answers do elude me,
 And echo through my mind,
 Like lonely love that fills the veins,
 Of a man doing time.

So if you should awake at night,
 And start to wonder why,
 Know that it's me lying here,
 Reaching across the sky.

The Rage Within

How can I let you see,
 The emotional storm inside of me?
 How do I make you understand,
 The battle going on within this man?

Forced to battle this beast within,
 That turns me rage into sin,
 Where regrets and sorrow run so deep,
 They even haunt me in my sleep.

Forever losing sight of the ones I love most,
 As their memories become like ghost,
 Always too busy to lend a hand,
 Never enough time to love this man.

Forced to see it matters not who they are,
 For they'll only walk so far,
 Down this dark road that has no end,
 The road I must travel to atone my sins.

Special Children

Today I overheard a young female officer talking to another officer. She was talking about her special little girl. Seems like this girl was standing on the front seat of her car the other day, grabbing at the sunrays as they reflected off the windshield. When her mother asked her what she was doing, the little girl said she was trying to catch a sunray for her mom as a present.

Both officers agreed on how special moments like that were. The other officer then asked if this mother got to spend time with her special little girl. "No, but when my career gets back on track, I'll have more time to spend with her, when she is older" said the young mother.

I wanted to scream and tell that mother to spend every single second she possibly can with her child, but I couldn't. Maybe after you read what follows you will better understand. It's the awful truth, as it happened to me. It starts with an unwritten letter — a letter that I can never send:

Dear Chris,

As I look at you, I see your hair is nicely combed. It always seemed to have a mind of its own. I can see that scar on your lip, hardly shows now. We were worried about that. You were such a brave little man when I took you to Dr. Catlin to get those three stitches. I was the one who almost fainted when they started sticking you with that needle. The nurse even made me leave the room.

On my way home, I told you that you could have any treat you wanted for being so brave. You wanted a cup of coffee, "like big men drink," you said. My brave little man, drinking coffee in the restaurant, just like big men. It was our secret; lucky mom never found out, huh? You have grown tall and nice looking. Guess what I'm proudest of in you? It's your kindness to all things.

I remembered that day you helped me fix my car. We sure got greasy — mom wouldn't even let us in the house for lunch, but we fooled her. We went to the store and got a pizza, then lipped off to mom and your two sisters, while eating it, still dirty. Yes, that was fun. We laughed a lot that day. I found out later that you did save a piece of pizza for your little sister; it was our secret too.

I've always been proud of you for some many reasons, Chris. Your silent kindness and strength, your loyalty, your soft heart and secrets you shared with me. I remember how you used to lay across my lap with your shirt pulled up exposing your bareback. I would trace my fingers lightly over your skin; it seemed to almost hypnotize you. I had done it many times when you had been a baby, to get you to sleep when you weren't feeling good. Guess you just never grew out of liking it. I liked it too.

I remember the day I came to tell that that I was going away for a long time — going to prison. You stood silently; listening with your head bowed and tears in your eyes, asking why? You hugged me and ran to your secret fort, crying. I cried too that day, Chris. I was ashamed of myself and of breaking your heart.

You did write me and send me colored pictures you drew in school, I had them on my cell for years, and yes, I bragged about them to my friends. I have lain awake many nights wondering who was teaching you, who was your first girlfriend, and how I would tease you about her, as if I were right there with you. I'm sorry for missing so much of you Chris.

Love,
 Daddy

We haven't featured this writer in a while because we felt he was being inappreciative for a moment, but we couldn't keep him off our pages for long because he really does have great things to say. He's writing from Florida State Prison in Raiford, Florida. After reading his work this time around we realize that we miss his presence in our pages. And this week is no different because he amazes us yet again. Our personal favorite is his piece titled, "Special Children" where he stresses the importance of our presence in our children's lives. He's reminded of how important his son is to him when he hears a female officer talking about her daughter to another officer. Then he goes on to talk about how agrees with Condi, good old fashioned politics, and the Blank Panther Party. We really appreciate his insights and wonderful ways of expressing himself. Thank you...

As I stood looking at my special little boy, in a light gray coffin, I was dressed in blue. Prison guards were besides me. I wanted to reach out and touch him just once more, but the chains on my wrists wouldn't allow it.

I'm so awfully sorry for missing the last years of Chris' life. If only I could have another chance to be the Daddy he wanted me to be — the Daddy he deserved. If I could just tickle Chris' back once more, or share some secrets with him, or tease him and hold him just for a minute. God, I would gladly die for a chance.

Chris was killed in a car accident. Hopefully you will better understand why I wish he could have read this letter while he was still alive. There are so many things I should have told him. So much time I should have spent with him. If you have a special child in your life, please don't, for any reason, miss one single second with that child. Don't let what happened to me happen to you. Those moments are so awfully important. To the lady officer with the special little sunray catcher — please believe me when I say "For god's sake, spend every single precious moment with your child now! This could be your last chance, because sometimes very special children don't get any older."

Good Old Fashioned Politics

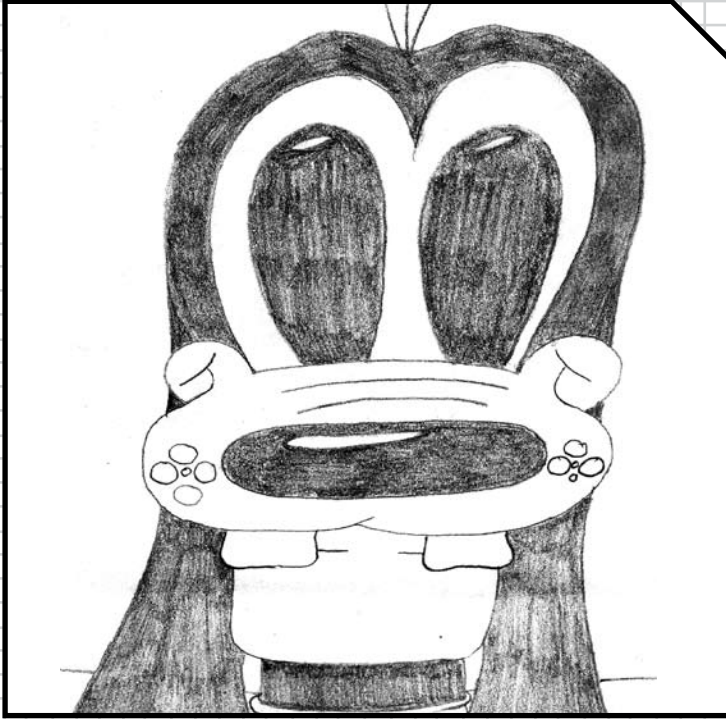
In as much as we've notice how things have changed around us, sometimes we ignore those things that haven't changed at all. The game of politics remains the same today as it's been for centuries. Politics is used to either rebuild a community or rape it of resources. It can be used to displace thousands of people in favor of another group, and it can be used to hoard a particular group into one area or purpose of control and containment.

Politics can be used to silence those who would preach empowerment, and forever tie the hands of those who can make a difference. Politics decides what school your children attend, who teaches them, and what they do while in school. Politics decides where you spend your money, how much you spend, and on what products. Politics dictates the fine line between being homeless and barely making ends meet.

Politics decides the people who represent us when it comes to dealing with government, and whether our loved ones live or die during times of war. Politics decide who gets rich from drug trafficking, and who goes to prison. It decides where drugs will be sold and to whom and in what quantity. It decides whose hands the guns go into and whose hands the money goes into.

Politics decides how our children grow up, how they will be punished, and for how long. It determines what our children can get away with, and how we will be punished if we don't raise them the way the state tells us to.

Good old fashion politics is something we might as well learn to live with. Even more so, we need to understand. Since it controls everything we do, we need to know how to deal with it, and how to make it work for us. Either that, or we will continue to be victims of it, and it will continue to alter itself to justify its purpose.



I Agree With Condi!

I don't know the U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and I have never agreed on anything before now, but I have to admit that at last, I agree with her. The lady and I are on the same page.

In a recent televised interview, Ms. Rice admitted that while things are better in the United States, racism still exists. Condoleezza pointed out that Blacks now sit in boardrooms as members. They serve as CEOs of large corporations, and are elected to key governmental positions.

In spite of all this progress, racism is alive, well and still serves as a hindrance to Blacks. Condoleezza Rice pointed out that the high-ranking positions of Secretary of State has been occupied a minority for the past 12 years. A white female, and two African-Americans have been the occupants of the Secretary of State office.

Education, hard work and dedication are the keys to overcoming racism and other roads to success. Blacks have lived with racism for more than 400 years. No matter how it is disguised or applied, it is the same old racism that Blacks have experienced since Blacks have been on these shores. Blacks must continue to work and fight to erase the last traces of racism and denied opportunities. But Blacks must not allow these devils in disguise to impede their progress.

Many Blacks feel that Sister Condi has forgotten who she is, and where she comes from. I have allowed myself to share in this thinking. I was really glad to hear Ms. Rice express her opinion on National television. Condoleezza didn't make a big deal out of it, but she did acknowledge the plight of Blacks as it relates to racism. At the same time, she advised Blacks not to be handicapped by this age-old devil. I could not have expressed this fact any better than Condoleezza Rice. I now believe that she realizes that she is Secretary of State. I also now believe that Ms. Rice also realizes that she is Black. I agree with Condi.

People And Things I Know About: The Black Panther Party

Founded in Oakland, California, in October 1966 by Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton, the Black Panther Party promoted the idea of militant self-defense for the Black community against police brutality. Originally named the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, the Panthers advocated a "Ten Point Program" that demanded full employment of Black people in America, decent housing, release of Black prisoners (all of whom were political prisoners in the eyes of the Panthers), payment of the forty acres and a mule (in contemporary currency) promised to former slaves during Reconstruction, and the holding of a United Nations plebiscite for the Black community to determine its future to the United States.

Blending the ideas of Malcolm X, Franz Fanon, Karl Marx, and Mao Tse-Tung, Seale and Newton rejected cultural nationalism and called for a revolution to address the colonial relationship of the Black community to the larger American society. In the Black community of Oakland, California, the Black Panthers were mainly known for wearing black berets and black leather jackets, and for creating a system of armed patrols that followed police whenever they stopped Black citizens.

The Panthers gained attention of the press in 1967 when Bobby Seale and twenty-five armed members marched to the capitol building in Sacramento, California, and read a statement of protest against gun-control bill introduced by California Assemblyman Don Mulford to limit the Panther's rights to carry weapons in public.

That incident also garnered the attention of the F.B.I. Director J. Edgar Hoover, who announced that the Black Panthers were "the greatest threat to the internal security of the country," and orchestrated a counterintelligence program to destabilize the party. In 1968 Eldridge Cleaver, a former Black Muslim, and in 1968 the Black Panther Party's Minister of Information, ran for U.S. President as a candidate of the Peace and Freedom Party. Black Panther Party was the victim of police and F.B.I. harassment, and the numerous members were killed in either shootouts with police or in raids of their homes of Black Panther members.

Although the Party contained roughly three thousand members in 1972, it collapsed shortly afterward because of internal divisions and legal problems. Elaine Brown assumed the chairmanship of the Party in 1974 when Newton left the United States for Cuba to avoid prosecution on murder charges; he eventually was killed in 1989 in a drug-related shooting. Bobby Seale was tried and convicted for traveling across state lines to incite a riot at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Eldridge Cleaver fled imprisonment by leaving the country, living in Algeria and Cuba, and breaking with the Party in 1971. Cleaver returned to the United States in 1976, became a political conservative and apologized for some of his former statements. Panther, a film on the early years of the Party, by Melvin and Mario Van Peebles, was released in 1995. The spirit of those years survives in the Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation, run by Brown and David Hilliard, another former Party officer.

Chicago Panthers Killed

In a raid on the Chicago headquarters of the Black Panther Party on December 4, 1969, a police shot and killed Fred Hampton, chairman of the Illinois Black Panther Party, as he lay in bed. Another Panther, Mark Clark, was killed and four other Panthers were seriously injured in the attack. The Chicago police used the wounding of one of the officers to substantiate its claim that police fired on Hampton and others in self-defense. But a later federal grand jury investigation proved that police had massed such a concentration of machine-gun fire that it was impossible any of the police could have been hit by return fire. No police were indicted in the shooting.

Crime Rates (Wha' Choo Know)

Wha' choo know about thievin'
 Wha' choo know about funk season
 Wha' choo know about holdin' yo' homeboy,
 As he bleeds from cerebrums
 Heaving
 His last breath of air, wit' his hair singed
 As the story unfolds
 My homies chapter begins to end
 This shhh ain't no rap video
 No book or no movie
 So I do more than spit on mics
 Like Uzis, I hock loogies
 Fo' those who claim they know me, they homies
 Well they can blow me
 I expose you fugazi gotties
 Suckas who be acting phony
 You square butts didn't help me when I had to struggle
 So I bubbled wit' nothin' mo' than mind and muscle
 Watch my hustle increase
 From the time I shake my sheets
 'Till I'm shoved in a pine box, and I rest wit' a piece
 This game don't play
 Weight exchanges hands everyday
 Sometime done wit' a handshake, sometimes taken wit K's

Wha' choo know 'bout being sick and tired
 Of false truths used fo' fire

Liars
 Hire tires
 I mean rollas and rydas
 To roll wit' the car, lend street cred
 Knowin' if you come back to the block
 The block gone come fo' yo' head
 Increasing crime rates become a local competition
 I don't glorify homicide
 Just describe what it is that's missing
 Wha' choo know, my homie
 Wha' choo know?

In my state and state of mind, you should know what it do
 Surrounded by enemies, any swing at anything that moves
 Iraqi AK 47's with the 7-62 issues
 In the hands of twelve year olds
 Stray bullets, they might hit you
 I ain't braggin', right, a fact of life
 It's just the way it is
 Caught dead to rights and charged as adults
 We's losin' all our kids
 Yet, you wonder why we pissed and blitz all alien turf invaders
 We's knowin' we's hated
 Stay drunk, plastered and faded
 To numb away the pain of knowin' I'm never gonna make it
 They say I'm miyate influenced

Memories Of

I'm thinking of you with a smile on my face
 Thoughts of you, engraved on my heart, cannot be
 erased
 Fantasies of loving you from sun up to sundown
 Your smile erases all doubts, all frowns
 Time passes, day by day, week by week
 Yet, memories of your voice still make it hard to speak,
 Hard to breathe, hard to eat and hard to sleep
 My loyalty is yours, my heart is in your keep

Now, we normally don't appreciate love poems as much as we do writing about what else goes on through your mind while incarcerated because we know how lonely being locked up can be and how people usually revert to thinking about a romance on the outs to keep hope alive. But with this next writer, one of the greatest Beat Without lyricists of all time, it's different. We can tell that Ray keeps watch of his romances with an attentive eye and because he is who he is and speaks the way he speaks, we have no choice but to respect his talent — his talent demands respect. He's writing from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA. He knows how much we enjoy him, but we'll let him know again anyways. You are a very special person to us Ray and we will always keep our doors open for you. You mean that much to us.

The truth is
 These bullets
 Is pulling me to do shhh that's violent and stupid
 And ninjas is ign'ant, figurin' if they take your shhh
 Then crime is legitimized 'cause it improves how they live
 "Young homie"
 "Hermano"
 "Carnal de Aztlan"
 And various propaganda aimed at this here Mex'can, can
 Jave reverse effects, on the intended program, plan
 For backfires when I fire, fire
 Through stereo wires
 And hit yo' eardrum like a Dayton spoke wire
 And since time waits for no man
 I'll stay after that weight
 That's why PO's connect my release date to increasing crime rates

Wha' choo know 'bout being sick and tired
 Of false truths used fo' fire
 Liars
 Hire tire
 I mean rollas and rydas
 To roll wit' the car, lend street cred
 Knowin' if they come back to the block
 The block gon' come fo' they head
 Increasing crime rates become a local competition
 I don't glorify homicide
 Just describe what it is that's missing
 Wha' choo know 'bout morals
 Being a thing you can't afford
 Wha' choo know, my homie
 Wha' choo know?

With You

Listening to Lyfe Jennings, "I Can't"
 And got visions of you on my mind
 I look forward to creating happy memories with you
 But the realist, my practical side, doubts there's time
 Or that we'll even be speaking once I parole
 But the dreamer that is my heart hopes
 To share something shining and beautiful
 With you
 Love is not an element in this dream
 Simply trust
 Lust
 And a deep respect for one another
 And each other's feelings
 The feelings we share with each other
 I see affection
 I feel the warmth of a lover
 And I know safety and comfort
 With you in my arms
 Things of hope and romance become truths
 Fantasies realized
 When I'm with you

What Happened To Forever?

Your whining? I'm fed up with it!
 Pain irrelevant
 Comparing your loss to mine
 Find new meaning to the phrase "free time"
 Unloved and unkind
 Callous from being burned
 Challenged to grow and learn
 A thorn without a rose
 Heart froze 'cause the world is cold
 I can predict your lines like weak rhymes
 Time after time
 I find'em regurgitated
 "I'm lonely," "I miss you"
 Yet yo' lust's unregulated
 blessings once heaven sent, now evanescent
 evanescence on a track, loop the playback
 to "my immortal"
 to my song, these lyrics
 they done opened up a portal
 and I quote: "these wounds won't seem to heal
 "This pain is just the real"
 "There's just too much that time cannot erase."
 End quote, and face facts
 She's a splinter in my heart
 Too much to bare the pain
 Would kill me if we tore apart
 Locked in a cinderblock
 You told me we'd always be together
 For now and for always
 What happened to forever?

Your Future Baby's Daddy

Secure in what I have to offer
 Don't trip on other fellas
 I trust in your feelings for me,
 So I'm never jealous
 I rather have your mind fo' life,
 Than just yo' ass fo' one night
 I'd rather have a dedicated gangsta chick,
 Than a disloyal wife,
 I want a girl that can cover my back like Avirex jackets
 And understand why I can afford no disrespect from
 thugs,
 Runts,
 Broads,
 And new booty maggots
 I can see you relate to what makes me tick
 You know the necessity of having callouses on my heart
 The game we equipped wit' is sick
 But you know we all have to pay our part, boo
 For now, I must go, but know, from your first letter,
 You had me
 God bless and goodbye
 Signed,
 Your future baby's daddy

I Surrender

Oh Lord, guide me, protect me, help me
 Teach me the ways of your righteousness
 Show me the glory of your lovingness
 I know I stumbled and fell along the way
 I take a look back to my past
 When I know I'm not supposed to
 And that's where I need you the most
 To help me, to guide me, to show me the way
 Teach me how to look forward,
 And leave the past behind...
 Because I know you have
 I lift up my hands to you
 With my eyes closed
 And open arms
 And I pray to you
 And I ask you
 To guide me, teach me
 To show me what your love is,
 "I surrender."
 To only you, my Lord, my God, my Savior
 Oh Lord, teach me, show me
 And guide me for the rest of my days
 I know what life has to offer
 But I'm struggling to find my way...
 There have been many roads
 I have came across
 And many battles I have fought
 But the battles are only getting tougher
 I need you to show me
 And put me on the right path in life
 I know the roads ahead
 Of me are only going to get tougher...
 So I put my faith in your hands
 "I Surrender."
 My mind, my heart and my soul...

DELFINO MARTINEZ

In order to 'surrender' one must humble himself to the maximum. And for some, especially the ones that act as though they're the hardest people ever to walk the earth, surrendering or even humbling one self can be a monumental task. Who wants to admit they're weak? Well, this next writer isn't weak at all, yet he writes about surrendering his will over to his higher power. For him, humbling himself is an act of courage and spiritual strength. For others, sometimes it's just a cop out to not deal with their current situations. However, we hope that if he continues on his spiritual journey, he'll have more "Beautiful Days," down the road. He's writing from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, CA.

Beautiful Days

Oh what days we shared,
 The nights we had,
 Holding each other so close
 For comfort...
 There's days we cried,
 And days we laughed
 Oh what beautiful days
 they were...
 some days were rough
 some days were calm
 Oh what beautiful days
 We shared...
 Those days we had, just sitting
 In silence,
 Those days we talked,
 Were beautiful days
 Yes they were...
 But the days we missed,
 Were the days I spent
 Behind these prison
 Walls...
 Our day is near, I just
 Can't wait,
 To spend the rest of
 My days,
 By your side...

To My Beat Within Fam'

What's popping? It has been sometime now since I last drop some lines. Mo' less, pardon me! But I was over here (Upstate Correctional Facility) caught up with crazy legal work. I'm fighting to get out of this box. For those of you who don't know, Upstate is the worstest box one can be in. They insolate us (inmates) from the masses, plus its administration is designed to deploy traps to keep those that come here forever. However, those who don't know me shall now. Also know I present myself to you in the purest form of love, loyalty, honor, respect and peace straight from the heart. I just wanted to drop you a few lines to let you know that I'm definitely feeling those who are gracing the pages of The Beat Within. Jail energy is felt 110%, because despite all that we (prisoners) are going through and been through it shows that we still got within us brothers and sisters who're focused in spite of all the bullshhh that we are face on a daily basics. So, keep up the good work, and just know that it'll pay off in the long run. Just stick to the script and keep on doing what you do, because nobody can take you out of your element but you. A person can only trigger some shhh that'll disturb your square, but it's up to you and you alone to make the decision to step outside of it. Straight up! Nevertheless I have forty-four topics in which I hope you (The Beat Within writers) can give some feed back on what I composed or should I say what I am going to share.

1). "Things fall apart"- At times I feel as if my entire life done fall apart and I don't have a clue as to how I'm suppose to get it back together again. But what I normally do is I take the negative feelings and flip it in to a positive (dig). I keep my thoughts clear to better enable me to focus upon how I am getting my life back upon the right path. I've learned that shhh only fall apart if you allow it to do so without any effort of trying to keep shit in the correct order or perspective.

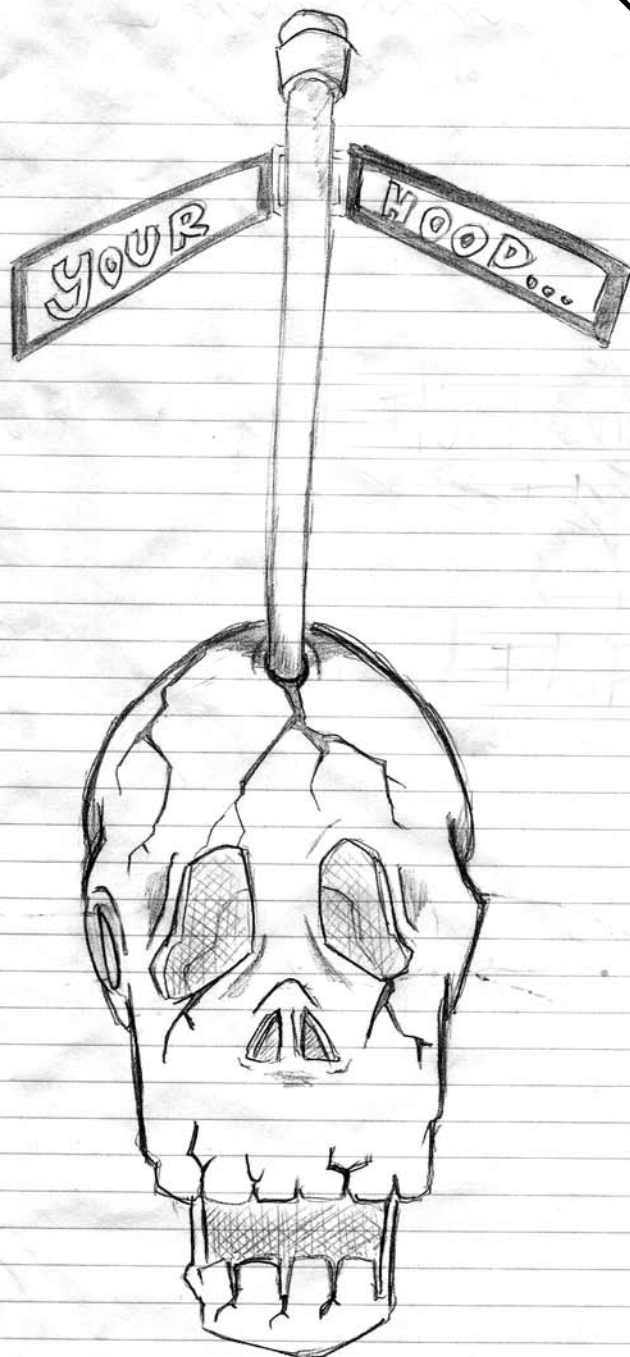
2). "Admitting you're wrong"- It takes a man and woman to own up to his or her wrong doings. But it takes even better men or women to admit there wrongs. Think about it and write your view on this. Maybe the world would be a much better place if we had men or women of such caliber controlling it (word).

3). "Choosing friends"- Honestly, this is a real tough one (why), because now days it's type difficult to really distinguish the real from the fakes and the fakes from the snakes. But I read somewhere or another that friends are like autumn leaves. You can find them any and everywhere, but real true friends are like diamonds, they're very hard to find understand?

4). "Purpose"- This is what we as human beings have been trying to figure out for as long as we've been on earth. One thing's for certain beloves everyone was put here for a reason and I guess it's our obligation to find out what that shhh may be as well as what "purpose" we serve being here on this earth or just being human beings — which one?

I stop there for now, but know that I'll be picking up right where I left off. I wanted to push you, my Beat fam, my thoughts. Hopefully I reach the view of your eyes and if so I hope plus pray I get a copy.

Another Beat Within veteran is being published in our pages this week. Brother Chan also known as the mighty Chan Rodriguez writes some topics he'd like the young people to address in his letter to "The Beat Within Family." He gives us our props and it's always a pleasure to get compliments, so thank you. Then he goes into talking about people who project the image of a gangsta, but in all actuality they're projecting an image that really isn't them. We get this a lot and we know there are people who wear masks to make themselves look like someone more intimidating than they really are. His third and concluding piece is about how we should all stop fighting and killing each other. And instead, come together to fight a bigger battle, the battle that's going on between the government and our communities. We agree with the general statement, but when we start talking about unifying to push something by any means necessary, we have to beware that sometimes it's not wise to fight fire with fire. How can we solve the hate that's displayed towards us with hate displayed towards them? Just something to think about... He's writing from the Upstate Correctional Facility in Malone, New York.



Those Who Portray That Gangster Image, But Really Isn't No G!

Those who are reading this are bugging right now, saying to themselves, like who the hell is this? Don't worry, by the time you get to the end of this letter you'll know exactly who I am. I am writing you to warn you. It's only fair that I do so because you are completely no match for me. So to soothe my conscience I figure I'd give you a heads up, and drop some jewels on you at the same time. See, you're young and you still have the time to grow, but your growth is slow, which makes you under developed. How you are now reminds me of when I was like 15, when I still felt like I had something to prove when I was ignorant and lost, and searching for an identity.

One of the most important things that I've learned is that we (Latino's and Blacks in particular) stagnate our own growth and development by our unwillingness to change. That is — change is growth! In order to grow one must change. That is a supreme truth, and it's evident in any and all living beings on this planet. There is nothing that doesn't change as it grows or grows as it changes; From plants to humans, and everything in between. But the change that I'm speaking of is of the mind. People who refuse to change their train of thought, and explore other and new ideas, stunt their own mental grow and development. (Change and growth, are a natural part of evolution. For a person to confine their self to one line of thought and reasoning is unnatural, and detrimental to one's own mind, self-containment, mental bondage, and slavery. Don't be a slave

of your thoughts, be a master of them!

Self-control starts in the mind. If you allow someone to influence/control your thoughts (mind), and then you relinquish control of your actions (body). So, before I move on let me give you some words of wisdom to remember (if I haven't already) be careful of your thoughts because your thoughts become words, be careful of your words because your words become actions, be careful of your actions because your actions become a character, and be careful of your character because your character becomes your destiny "what will your destine be?"

Moving right along. In this world, there are those you mess with, and those you don't mess with. I am one of those who you do not mess with. But you have; now it's too late. See, when I first told you that I didn't want to speak to you or any dealings with you, I was doing that for your own safety because I seen what type of ninja you was. Ignorant, immature, mental underdeveloped, you mistook my humbleness as being meek. What you think of yourself, I know that you're not built that. I know that G image that you're portraying is just a façade. You are not fit to survive because you cannot stand on your own. Your survival is based on the support you get from the pack you run with. But you're a sheep in wolves clothing, and it's just a matter of time before you get exposed. Dancing with wolves is dangerous and I can sense your fear, your fear of not being reorganized, of not being expected, the fear you have of being yourself because you think it won't be good enough. That fear you have is like an open wound, and in this ocean of life you're swimming with sharks. Next time be yourself because I know you truly aren't a G par!

A Call To All So-Called Gangs

A call or should I say a cry to all so-called "Gangs!" Which Gang is used in a deceptive context when applied to oppressed people? Since the beginning of history, humans have coalesced into groups, communed and grown! People outlived nature's oppressive conditions and achieved technical heights by getting together and thinking collectively. Towards the oppressed, some may label this grouping as a gang. The proper word though is organization as said by J. Blaze Cruz in "The Evolution Of Ghetto Style Organizations." "Why Must We Unite?" By none other than Mr. Chan Rodriguez. For without unity our ultimate success is but a dream far from anything feasible or even remotely real, all that separates us should be thrown to the side, hurting you is hurting me. How could I claim that I ride? Here is a taste of my thoughts!

WE (as a people) need to unite in order to pose a formidable threat to those that oppress us! Individuals can be pacified by those in power pacified or silenced. But, if we all unify for one common cause, the oppressors wouldn't even entertain an attempt at pacifying the multitudes of us and to silence us (silence=kill) would mean war! Contrary to what many people may believe, this government couldn't handle a war of us against them! Financially it would be crippling. The economy would crumble. Sure there will be a great amount of casualties. But, there always are in war. But, if you fear death, then you'll never live! We have to unite beloved brothers and sisters because otherwise we lose focus of who our enemy is and continue to perpetuate violence against our own. When we allow ourselves to fall into different factions, we're only facilitating the divide and conquer strategy from our enemies. We need to unite in order to make our enemy suffer. They deserve to suffer from

creating the circumstances in a system that breeds the self-hate that we've promoted since the late 60's.

We have to become dedicated to us instead of our destruction. Your pain has to become mine and vice versa. Now if we attack our enemy with the same vigor that we attack each other I'm sure that we'd be victorious. They (our enemy) love and thrive off of our division. I took an oath to become my enemy's nightmare instead of my brothers and sisters! I am an educated, physically fit warrior who is willing to die for what I believe in. I am expendable in the eyes of our struggle. We have to unite to promote that mind state. We need to because the people can't engage the enemy with a divided energy. We'll always be too weak to expect victory, our army is too divided. We are the people's army. We all must find that common ground in which to meet on.

- 1). We is the power of our people
- 2). Globally we are the majority so we out number those who oppress us and last but not least, it's time to take our proper places, as the controllers of this earth! We need to unite now while this nation is distracted in Iraq. By them deploying troops they become that much vulnerable. They are opened to various strategic hits — strategic being the key word! They aren't ready! I'm sure I only could be a thorn in their side alone. But, if I had all of you I'm sure the United States would be in a real state of emergency! Let's lead by example for those who come behind us. It's time to create our legacy. Otherwise they'll follow our destructive habits. Our unity is the only way. We'll never produce a movement any other way. If we don't stand for something, we'll fall for anything! Unite we stand divided we fall. Separation is the enemy's companion unity his enemy.

Your ghetto soldier, Brother Chan!

Jail

Jail
You cannot smoke
Or toke
Trust
It's no joke
Jail
The best thing to me
Is when I get some mail
Days I cry
Others I sigh
Missing my family
That cannot come nowhere near me
Loss of visits
No more of those precious 60 minutes
Jail
It's making me frail
Also when you turn around
There's always that next tale
Jail
Times I feel
I'm getting beat down with hail
No respect towards me
Some CO's they start to bore me
With them always coming towards me
With their non-sobriety!
Jail
Getting caught up in the system
To me was a blessing
It had fixed me
Hopefully that I can see
It sure did make the best of me
My thinking is clearer
Making me not want to get nearer
To that bad ass drug dealer
Need the change in my life
Old life will be far out of sight
Jail
Trust me
Trust me indeed
I have learned my lesson
And counted my blessings
The nightmares almost over
For now on I will stay sober
Jail
No more jail
This is not no tale
This shhh is fo' real!

We're sure that everyone in Dina's situation would ask the same questions, so we aren't surprised by her wonderfully empathetic heart. As she writes way from the other side of the country, back east, in the Connecticut Correctional Facility in Niantic, Connecticut, we're overcome with sadness at the thought of what she must be experiencing being locked up with a child on the outside. Hopefully, some of you can feel her pain — we assume that you will...



The Past

No more words of hurt
No more words of hatred
Words of peace
And intelligence
That shall be sacred
I want to be on my high
And so I shall not lie
No more of my bottoms
That will cause me more problems
The past is in the past
Time to move on
Which I will do very fast
I have made many faults
I do apologize to the ones I've hurt
I do promise there will be "no more" bursts
The future has come. And take me away
To be clean and free
And to take all the good advice.

Questions I Ask

To my sister Antonia
Is she thinking of me?
Does she sleep at night?
Is she still using her blankie?
Does she ever ask for her mommy?
What kind of new foods is she eating?
What new words is she learning?
Is she still going on the potty?
Does she ever ask for her mommy?
What new cartoons is she into?
Who does she play with?
Is she ok?
How are you punishing her?
I hope it's the time out way
And not the spanking way.
Why haven't you let her write to me?
You know what I mean,
By drawing pictures for her mommy!
Antonia, I don't think you realize how hard it is
For me being a mommy
Not being able to see
The one and only thing
That matters to me
Which is my beautiful baby!

Hear My Voice

I'm calling out
 I've made my choice
 Listen to me
 Hear my voice

I was lost
 I walked alone
 There was no light
 To guide me home

I read your word
 It eased my pain
 I found through you
 I've much to gain

I did not know
 But now I do
 I must give
 My heart to you

This next writer is a very spiritual one. He refers to God in each and every one of his poems. And we begin to wonder how is it that so many people find God while incarcerated. Some do it for reasons that aren't genuine while others do it for very honest reasons. But is it something one can do in the first place? For those of us who believe in a higher power, there usually was an experience or an awakening of some sort, whether it's prison or something else like a car accident. But whatever the case, if that's what offers hope and can sustain us throughout our trials and tribulations then we're all for it. He's writing from Chesire, Connecticut.

He Painted It Complete

From high on a mountain
 Overlooking the land
 I can see the green valleys
 A color in God's plan

There's blue sky above me,
 White clouds drifting by
 A bright yellow sun
 Shining down from the sky

There's orange in a rainbow
 There's color everywhere
 On the distant horizon
 Purple mountains appear

There's red in a rose
 Some roses are pink
 The earth was God's canvas
 He painted it complete

At The Cross

At the cross you'll find forgiveness,
 Your sins are yours no more,
 Believe in the name of Jesus
 He's the way, the light, and the door.

The cross is filled with peace and love,
 Through faith it fills the heart
 It's also filled with strength and hope
 And it sets the righteous apart

The cross is a gift of salvation
 It's a free gift received through God's Son
 Once you believe and accept him
 In Christ you're united as one

If you feel you may be falling
 And you don't want to end up lost
 You'll find all you need to save you
 When you're standing at the cross

Treasure Chest From Heavens

There's a treasure chest from heaven,
 And it's filled with words like love,
 There are words of comfort, words of faith
 And they all come from God above
 One by one God placed inside
 Words that will help us grow
 There are words to teach us right from wrong
 And to guide us where ever we go

You'll also find within this chest
 Words of peace and hope
 There are words to help one understand
 And words to help one cope

All the words we will ever need
 God placed within this chest
 You only have to just look inside
 And your heart it will do the rest

I Pledge To Jesus

I pledge to Jesus
 Of everlasting life
 My confession of sin
 To the one true light

And in his name
 I will ask as I pray
 To guide my heart
 Till the judgment day

I will keep my faith
 And say my Amens
 Believe in his word
 That he will come again

Then upon his return
 When I'm raised from the grave
 I will meet him in heavens
 As one who was saved

Blessed Are You

Blessed are you,
 Who ask to be saved
 Look to the cross
 Your debt, I have paid

Blessed are you
 Who are spreading my word
 Turn them to God
 For my truth to be heard

Blessed are you
 Who live not for sin
 When you choose to repent
 Your heart lets me in

Blessed are you
 Who kneel down and pray
 For life to begin
 I am the way

The Bible

The Bible, it is your teacher
 It will guide you through your life
 It will pave your way to heaven
 And teach you wrong from right

It will light the path you're walking
 Feed you, to help you grow
 Its promise can never be broken
 Its truth, you'll want to know

It will answer all your questions
 When you knock upon its door
 Your heart will feel its spirits
 It will leave you wanting more

It's the way to your salvation
 Trust it, read it, and believe
 Have faith in the bible it's the word of God
 For the Bible is all you'll need

I'm so awfully sorry for missing the last years of Chris' life. If only I could have another chance to be the Daddy he wanted me to be — the Daddy he deserved. If I could just tickle Chris' back once more, or share some secrets with him, or tease him and hold him just for a minute. God, I would gladly die for a chance.

read the rest of Shawn Montgomery piece on page 56

